

THE PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE OF HEGEL'S PHENOMENOLOGY OF SPIRIT

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PhD

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1984



# DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis, submitted to the Faculty of Social Sciences in candidacy for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, has been composed by me and is entirely my own work.

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## ABSTRACT

Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit has been subjected to widely differing interpretations. This work concentrates on trying to understand what Hegel himself meant, and addresses itself more to the purpose and the structure of his argument than to its letter.

Hegel's Phenomenology is an essay on the value of classical thought, written in opposition to the evaluation of the ancients by the two dominant schools of thought of the day, Enlightenment and Romanticism. On the one hand, Hegel seeks to establish the value of the classical approach, which sees truth as something existing independently of human reason in a world of forms, and reason as only a method of discovering this truth. This is to be contrasted to the Enlightenment view which equates reason with truth. On the other hand, Hegel holds that if truth exists as a fact, we should nevertheless accede to the more modern view which insists that if the truth is to be known, this knowledge cannot be merely empirical, but must also be capable of being shown to be necessary. This is to be contrasted to the Romantic view which equates truth with perfection, beauty, harmony, and so on, but not with rational necessity.

The structure of the Phenomenology reflects the structure of Plato's Republic. Plato presents the notion of justice (a) in the individual as a balance between the three component parts of the soul, and (b) in the state as the balance of the cardinal virtues. Hegel presents Spirit to consciousness (a) in the individual as consciousness, self-consciousness, and reason, and (b) in the state or "objectively", as ethical order, culture (or law), and

morality. The primary exegetical concern of this work is to show how Hegel adopts and adapts the Platonic scheme, and in particular to show the extent to which Hegel modifies Plato's views in points both of detail and of generality to accord with his doctrine of the self-development of the concept.

At a more general level, it is hoped to present Hegel's ideas as both independent and orthodox, and in particular as having little in common with those on the European left who claim to draw inspiration from him. At the same time, it is hoped to contrast usefully the orthodoxy Hegel draws upon with the rather different orthodoxy which has been established in Britain in this century.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Richard Gunn for his support for and interest in my work over many years, and for the very many hours he has given over to it. I would also like to thank my father for his support, both moral and financial, and to dedicate this work to him.

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## PREFACE

I have set out in this work to give an interpretation of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit. It falls to me first to explain why I should have chosen to do something which is both so ambitious, and yet at the same time has been done many times before.

In the first place, although in other circumstances it would be prudent to spend more time getting to know specific aspects of a philosopher's thought in detail before attempting anything like a general interpretation of a central, and in this case extremely difficult work, this cannot be said of Hegel. Hegel's work is above all systematic, and it simply is not possible to grasp the full significance of any particular aspect of his thought or passage of his writing without understanding its relation to the whole system in which it participates.

If the system were of Hegel's invention only, this would put the student in the apparently impossible position of needing to know the whole before the parts. If Hegel is right, however, the system is a real existence which is implicitly present in any "natural consciousness", in much the same way as, for example, the "archetypes" are implicitly present in every individual as part of the "collective unconscious" in Jung's work.<sup>1</sup> In order to understand and judge Hegel, therefore, the student must interpret each stage of his thought as an attempt to reveal to conscious knowledge something which is implicitly present in all experience, or, in plainer language, he must always seek to view the whole through the parts.

1. C.G.Jung, The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious. Routledge and Kegan Paul 1959.



In one sense, then, the major weakness of this work is not that it is too general, but that it is not general enough. In focussing on Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit, I am abstracting away from at least two major aspects of his system, namely logic and philosophy of nature, and arguably also from important aspects of philosophy of Spirit, such as, for example, anthropology and psychology.<sup>2</sup> I am very aware of this weakness in this work, and I have tried so far as possible (which may not be very far) to avoid prejudging issues which should be resolved only on the basis of a firm knowledge of other aspects of Hegel's system, especially his Science of Logic.

In the second place, although a good deal of work has been done on Hegel recently, much of it focussing on the Phenomenology, it is not the case that there is even broad agreement about the significance and general intention of his work. If we consider, for example, some of the work done around the period of the last war, that is, at the beginning of the recent revival of interest in Hegel, we can discern at least three quite distinct pictures of Hegel. There is the marxist view, which interprets Hegel as nearly - but not quite - a marxist. Then there is the existentialist view which sees Hegel as nearly, but again, usually, not quite an existentialist. Thirdly, there is the British view, which regards Hegel like all things continental with deep suspicion, and defensively proclaims that he is totalitarian, historicist, deliberately obscure - in short, anything which will excuse us from having to study him. Each of these views is, as will be argued in due course, not simply partial or overstated, but completely and directly opposed to Hegel's own meaning.

2. Comparing the Phenomenology of Spirit to the most complete exposition of Hegel's system, the Berlin Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences See Ch. 3 below.

More recent work on Hegel, of course, has almost always gone beyond the boundaries of these limited approaches. However, it has not been unaffected by them, and perhaps - to risk another generalisation - this goes some way towards explaining the fact that the post-war revival of interest in Hegel has often been accompanied by a decline in the standard of Hegel scholarship. Whereas earlier Hegel was studied in the context of his position in post-Kantian philosophy in Germany, more recently students have often been sidetracked into defending Hegel against certain more one-sided interpretations of his work and applications of his thought which have little to do with his own intentions, rather than engaging with more substantial issues.

The present work is no exception, and I too came to study Hegel through the influence of such writers as Kojève (especially), Lukács and Popper, and this background necessarily influences my approach to Hegel. However, although I have felt it necessary to engage with the interpretations of such writers, I have tried to keep this to a minimum. Given the wide discrepancies between the various interpretations of Hegel, and the ideological motivations which may sometimes be imputed to them, it has seemed to me more important to stay as far as possible with the question simply of what Hegel actually did say. The current needs of Hegel scholarship in general, so it seems to me, are summarised by this statement of Lauer's:

"The question with which we are faced ... is neither whether Hegel is correct in what he says nor whether his interpreters are justified in what they say of him. Rather the question is one of finding out just what Hegel does say and of determining what impact that can have on our own thinking". (Quentin Lauer, Hegel's Concept of God, State University of New York Press, 1982, p.2)

In focussing on what Hegel actually says, however, I do not mean to examine

the texts by chapter and verse, or to suggest that other interpreters have misrepresented or falsified the letter of Hegel's views. On the contrary, with one or two notable and well known exceptions, Hegel scholars have generally been extremely faithful to the letter of Hegel's work. Rather, the point is to interpret the meaning of the letter of Hegel's work for Hegel by asking (a) why he chooses to say certain things, and not others, and (b) why he chooses to say them in a particular context and at a particular place in his writing. This means focussing especially on the purpose and structure of the Phenomenology, and only subsequently and in this context on its detail.

My experience leads me to conclude that this is in fact the only way to make sense out of Hegel's work, and by saying this I do mean to imply the strong conclusion that any other approach which does not properly account for the ultimate purpose and the structure of Hegel's work - should such an approach exist - will literally not make sense. On the other hand, I should emphasise that Hegel's goals are neither esoteric nor particularly idiosyncratic. They are simply the goals of philosophy itself, in the orthodox sense of that word in the platonic and christian traditions.

It follows that to give an account of Hegel's goals is also to give a general account of the purpose of philosophy. This was not my intention as I set out, and I have not entered into debates about the purpose of philosophy in any polemical way. Nevertheless, I have been impressed by Hegel's strong and direct sense of the justification of his discipline, and I have also come increasingly to feel<sup>3</sup> that this sense is strikingly absent in contemporary British thinking.

3. As Martin Walker argued in a recent series of articles in The Guardian, 9th, 10th and 11th January, 1984.

Recent American work on Hegel seems to endorse this conclusion, perhaps because in America philosophy has a stronger sense of its own purpose. Anne and Henry Paolucci, for example in the introduction to their selection of Hegel's writings on tragedy, that

"When philosophy is emptied of its high aesthetic and religious content, it becomes - Hegel never wearies of saying - an empty intellectual exercise" (Paolucci and Paolucci, Hegel on Tragedy Harper Torchbooks, New York, 1975)

Similarly, the central importance of Hegel's view, which may be summarised abstractly as that the true purpose of philosophy is knowledge of God, is increasingly being acknowledged. Lauer, for example, writes

"Only in the light of "absolute Spirit" is anything Hegel says intelligible. It will be the contention of all that follows that, in Hegel's view, "absolute Spirit" is in fact to be identified with God and that therefore, only if Hegel's "Concept of God" is intelligible will anything Hegel says be intelligible. It will not be necessary to claim that Hegel's concept of God does indeed correspond with the Christian concept of God. I am convinced, however, that Hegel indeed thought it did. More than that, I am also convinced that, if he did not think it did there is no way to make sense out of Hegel's philosophy". (Lauer, Hegel's Concept of God, op.cit. p. 19).

I do not think I would have accepted this point of view when I embarked on this work. However, now that it is complete, I must report the accuracy of another judgement of Lauer's: "Nor can our own thinking remain unaffected if we have reflected long and seriously on Hegel's concept of God".<sup>4</sup> My own conclusion is that not only is Lauer right about Hegel, but that Hegel is probably right about philosophy in general, and that if there is any justification for the pursuit of philosophy at all it must be along the lines he suggests.

4. Lauer, Hegel's Concept of God, op. cit. p.20.

## PART ONE

### INTRODUCTION



The first part of this work deals specifically with the aim and structure of the Phenomenology. It is not to be inferred from this, however, that parts two and three, which deal with some of Hegel's specific arguments in more detail, are no longer concerned with the aim and structure of the whole work. I have tried hard to be concerned with nothing else. Indeed, I have come close to the conclusion that Hegel himself is concerned with little else. Anyone who has tried to write about Hegel must have had the unnerving experience that the closer one comes to understanding Hegel, so the closer one's own exegesis comes to Hegel's original; and I have certainly found that the more I have tried to emphasise only the parts of the Phenomenology which relate the parts to the whole, the more I have found myself emphasising the entire work, and the more the proportion of the work which can be regarded as accidental detail has been whittled away to nothing. Like Aristotle, Hegel deals only with essentials.

The first part, therefore, should be regarded as an introduction to and a prerequisite of the later sections, and not as a separate topic. It deals first with Hegel's notion of "the absolute", secondly with his conception of "spirit", and thirdly with the specific approach to spirit designated by the term "phenomenology".

## CHAPTER ONE : The Absolute

Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit is quite often regarded as what Quentin Skinner<sup>1</sup> has called an 'eternal text' of philosophy. That is to say, it is expected that it should contain a truth which transcends historical circumstances and the particular intentions of its author. In order fully to understand it, it is necessary only to read it very carefully.<sup>2</sup> Up to a point, this is also the approach offered here. However, I do not think it is possible to understand the Phenomenology (or any other work of philosophy) without giving due attention to the circumstances of its composition. I want therefore to begin by considering some of the major questions which preoccupied Hegel while he was composing the Phenomenology. That is, to use Aristotelian language, I want to account for its 'final cause'; hopefully avoiding the superficiality Hegel associates with this approach, if it is used as a substitute for a real engagement with the substance of a philosopher's thought.<sup>3</sup>

In preparing for the republication of the Phenomenology before his death in 1831 Hegel wrote a note which indicates that he held its polemical aspect to be very important. He described it as:

1. Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas" in History and Theory 1959 pp. 5-53 and Machiavelli.
2. See P. Singer, Hegel OUP 1983 p. ix or A.Kojève, Introduction to the Reading of Hegel for examples of a 'Sacred Text' approach to Hegel.
3. Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit, trans. J.B.Miller, Clarendon Press Oxford, 1977 (Cited hereafter as Phenomenology) p.3.

"a peculiar earlier work which ought not to be revised, since it related to the time at which it was written, a time at which an abstract absolute dominated philosophy". (J.N.Findlay in Hegel, Phenomenology, p.v.) 4

Far from containing an eternal truth, the Phenomenology appears already to be out of date in Hegel's own lifetime, at least in terms of direct polemical relevance. So what is this relevance?

By the 'abstract absolute' Hegel seems to mean the idea which had dominated philosophy since Descartes, that rational speculation, empty in itself, can generate truth if it can be grounded in a single indubitably true proposition, an absolute *premise*. In Descartes this is the *cogito*, since I cannot rationally doubt my own existence. Spinoza, on the other hand finds the absolute not in the ego but in God or nature, which as *ens causa sui*, is the sole ground of its own existence. In Hegel's day these two conceptions of the absolute appear respectively in Fichte's philosophy as the formula of identity Ego = Ego, and in Schelling's philosophy as the 'point of indifference'  $A = A$ .

What is less clear is what Hegel counterposes to this conception of the absolute. Certainly he does not abandon the idea of absolute truth itself, since he finds the idea of relative truth absurd,<sup>5</sup> and he opposes only the abstract conception of truth which was fashionable in his day. However,

4. It was also at this time that Hegel suppressed the subtitle "First part of Science", as he records in a preface to the 1831 edition of the greater Logic. See Hegel, Science of Logic, Allen and Unwin 1969, p.29 and J.Hyppolite, Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.48.

5. Hegel Phenomenology, p. 47-8.

since he has abandoned the idea that the truth can be expressed in a single syllogistic proposition in favour of the idea that "The true is the whole",<sup>6</sup> it is no longer possible to say in simple terms just what the Absolute or True is. Modern commentators are not always helpful on this point. Richard Norman, for example, comments that the "portentious-sounding term the Absolute ... seems to mean simply 'reality' or 'things as they are in themselves'".<sup>7</sup> This is scarcely an adequate account of a concept which is almost by definition the centre of a philosopher's work, that is, his conception of truth.

If the true is the whole, we might conclude that we should first get to know the parts of the Hegelian system, and only then attempt the final ascent to the overall view which alone is true. However, although we certainly need to know the individual parts of Hegel's system, it is not the case that the Truth is simply the sum of these parts, like the Hobbesian watch.<sup>8</sup> On the contrary, it is necessary to grasp each part at each stage as a moment of the Absolute, so that it is necessary at each stage to have some preconception of the Absolute. It is, in fact, a central contention of this work that it is impossible to understand Hegel without taking on board his notion of the Absolute, and that he has been widely misinterpreted by those who neglect to do so.

I want to begin in this chapter by giving a very brief and sketchy account of the way Hegel came to see the abstract Absolute as the dominant issue

6. Hegel Phenomenology, p.11.

7. Richard Norman, 'Hegel's Phenomenology' Sussex University Press, 1976 p. 27 n2.

8. Thomas Hobbes, De Cive or the Citizen, S.P. Lamprecht (ed), New York, 1949, pp. 10-11. Quoted by C.B. Macpherson in his introduction to Hobbes' Leviathan, Pelican 1968, p. 27.

in philosophy in his day. I hope thereby to show some of the wider implications of this idea and hence of the issues Hegel will have to raise in opposing it. I am by no means attempting anything like a general account of the development of Hegel's thought, which would be well beyond the scope of this work, but selecting only material which I consider to be of direct relevance for elucidating the notion of the Absolute which guides the Phenomenology.<sup>9</sup>

Hegel was born on 27 August 1770 in Stuttgart, a protestant enclave in catholic southern Germany. In 1788, destined by his family to the church, he went to the theological seminary - the 'Stift' - at Tübingen. He seems to have got through the prescribed course of study, two years of philosophy followed by three years of theology,<sup>10</sup> with the minimum effort. He was dismissed in 1793 with a certificate saying that he was

"a man of good parts and character, somewhat fitful in his work, with little gift of speech; and that he was fairly well acquainted with theology and philology, but had bestowed no attention whatsoever on philosophy" (E.Caird, Hegel, W. Blackwood, 1883, p.12).

This last judgement is scarcely accurate, and Hegel was in fact very active outside of the curriculum of the Stift. He formed a political club with Schelling and others to discuss the ideas of the French Revolution, and

9. For studies of Hegel's early period see R.Plant, Hegel, Allen & Unwin, 1973, which gives an excellent account of the intellectual atmosphere of the period, and for more detailed scholarly accounts Harris Hegel's Development Oxford 1972 or Lukács: The Young Hegel Merlin 1975. Although it is true that Hegel's early works do not display the quality of the Phenomenology and later works, they are invaluable for the student of these latter works, if only because Hegel is so reserved about explaining his intentions and a study of his juvenalia is virtually the only way of discovering them. For comments on the value of Hegel's juvenalia see Plant, op. cit, p. 15-16, S. Rosen, G.W.F.Hegel, Yale University Press, 1973, p. 3, or W.Kaufmann, Hegel Wiedenfeld and Nicolson 1965, p. 12.
10. Hegel had apparently originally intended to do law, and later settled on theology, in his own words "by natural inclination on account of its connection with classical literature and philosophy". (Harris op. cit. p. 57).



developed a reputation as a defender of Liberty and Fraternity.<sup>11</sup> The atmosphere in the University of Tübingen is summarised in this now famous story.

"A bust to Liberty was placed on a Balcony between busts of Brutus and Demosthenes; the room resounded with patriotic speeches. Two young students, members of the club, left the town to plant a Liberty tree: they were called Schelling and Hegel". (Plant, op. cit. p. 51, taken from Leon, *Fichte et son temps*).<sup>12</sup>

Hegel's reading at this time, though subordinated to his theological and to a lesser extent political interests, includes a good deal of philosophy. He certainly studied Rousseau, and Kant's ethical works, and, together with his friend Hölderlin, Plato and Sophocles.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, there is little evidence that at Tübingen he felt to any great degree the tension between enlightenment and romantic ideas which was to become his preoccupation throughout the next decade.

Hegel left Tübingen in 1793 and spent the next six years working as a private tutor, first for three years at Berne, and then at Frankfurt. This was probably the most volatile period of his development, and produced the essays on "The Positivity of the Christian Religion" and "The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate", published in the 'Early Theological Writings'.<sup>14</sup>

11. Caird, op. cit. p.10.

12. Caird disputes the details of this story. Caird op. cit. p. 10. See also W.Kaufmann, op. cit. p. 37.

13. Caird loc. cit. Harris op.cit. p. 57 ff.

14. G.W.F. Hegel; Early Theological Writings (cited hereafter as ETW) Pennsylvania Paperback, 1981, edited by Nohl (1907) and translated by T.M.Knox. These were not published until collected by Nohl a century after they were written. Hegel - as he once said disparagingly about Schelling who published profusely in his youth - disapproved of carrying out his education in public. (Caird op. cit. p. 14). Knox's translation leaves out some of the writings published in Nohl's edition of the 'Theologische Jugendschriften', notably Das Leben Jesu.

The Positivity of the Christian Religion, composed at Berne, records Hegel's preliminary attempts to apply the ideas of his contemporaries to the orthodox theology he had learned at the Stift. It is composed in two parts. The first is recognisably an application of Kant's ideas to interpretation of the New Testament, with fairly sharp criticism of some interpretations associated with catholicism. The second part draws on Romantic ideas and shows Hegel's early commitment to the idea of a '*Volkreligion*',<sup>15</sup> as a solution to various problems of contemporary German culture. There is also a third part written at Frankfurt, which expands the opening sections of Part I - indicating that in spite of the vast development of Hegel's thought at Frankfurt, he did not turn his back on the Berne essay.

The essay opens with a contrast between the teaching of the Old and New Testaments.<sup>16</sup> Hegel interprets the judaic tradition of the Old Testament as a teaching of "positive law", that is, of law which is obeyed because it is authoritatively commanded by God through the decalogue. The New Testament then teaches that this, though not wrong, is immoral, since the individual does not choose for himself to follow the ethical law, but does it only because it is commanded. Christ, in Hegel's view, takes the step of introducing the (kantian) principle of individual autonomy which is the precondition for true morality, thus "restoring to morality the freedom

15. See Plant, Hegel Ch. 2. for the notion of 'folk religion' in Hegel's early work.

16. We will see later it can be argued that Hegel's hostility to the Old Testament remains to affect his ideas in the Phenomenology, and is open to the criticism that Hegel loses sight of much of its positive value. (See below p.73 and pp. 273 ff.) or M. Foster, Political Philosophies of Plato and Hegel, Oxford, 1935 p. 180 ff.

which is its essence".<sup>17</sup> Having thus made Christ into a Kantian, Hegel then has to explain why positive ethical law remains so large a part of the teaching of the catholic church. He places the blame with the Apostles themselves, who never succeeded in fully escaping their Jewish background in spite of the impetus given by Christ.

The second part of the essay draws more on Romantic ideas, probably under the influence of Hölderlin,<sup>18</sup> and idealises the warm harmony of Greek life in contrast to the rigidity of Judaic traditions. It is headed with a blunt retort to Klopstock's dismissal of Romanticism, "is Achaea, then, the Teutons' fatherland?", to which Hegel replies simply "Is Judea then the Teutons' fatherland?".<sup>19</sup> He then goes on to rate christian traditions for divorcing religion from the political and cultural life of the people, in distinction from pagan religions.

"Christianity has emptied Valhalla, felled the sacred groves, extirpated the national imagery as a shameful superstition, as a devilish poison, and given us instead the imagery of a nation whose climate, laws, culture and interests are strange to us and whose history has no connection whatever with our own". (ETW, p. 146).

A little later he laments

"Who could be our Theseus, who founded a state and was its legislator? Where are our Harmodius and Aristogiton to whom we could sing scolia as the liberators of our land?" (ibid).

However, Hegel, perhaps in common with many writers associated with "Sturm und Drang", does not show any awareness of a tension between the ideas in the two parts of his essay, that is between customary ethics (*Sittlichkeit*)

17. ETW, op. cit. P. 69. Hegel's reading of Kant comes from Critique of Practical Reason and Religion within the Limits of Mere Reason. See Kroner's introduction to ETW, p. 4.

18. Cf. Hölderlin; Hyperion. Hölderlin was composing Hyperion at the same time as Hegel was writing this essay, presumably with Hegel's knowledge.

19. ETW, p. 145. The Klopstock quotation is from his 'Odes'. See Harris, op. cit. p. 36n.

and moral duty (*Moralität*).<sup>20</sup> Indeed, he manages to interpret Greek ethical life along lines which have more in common with Kant or Rousseau than any classical writer:

"As free men the Greeks and Romans obeyed laws layed down by themselves ... They neither learned nor taught [a moral system] but evinced by their actions the moral maxims which they could call their very own. In public as in private and domestic life every individual was a free man, one who lived by his own laws" (ETW p.154).

Perhaps it is because Hegel was so blithely happy to interpret ancient teaching along such modern lines in his youth that he reacted so vehemently against it at Jena. The Phenomenology, as we will see, is directed against precisely such ideas as these.

20. On *Moralität* and *Sittlichkeit* in Hegel's early work see W. Kaufmann, op. cit, Ch. 1. esp. pp. 49-50.

At Frankfurt, Hegel wrote a second essay on religion titled The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate. Like the first essay, it is, in the words of one commentator, "full of sarcastic and then still unpublishable contrasts of the glorious Greeks and the wretched Christians".<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, it finds a good deal more of positive value in the New Testament, and shows Hegel moving away from the abstract Kantian notion of autonomy which pervades his earlier writing,<sup>22</sup> towards the more concrete notion of freedom as Spirit which finds its home in the Phenomenology. Christ's teaching is no longer represented as Kantian, but as 'raised above morality',<sup>23</sup> morality here meaning the Kantian domination of passion by reason.<sup>24</sup> *Moralität* and *Sittlichkeit* are distinguished, and Hegel looks to Christian teaching in order to reconcile the two - an aim which he never quite gives up, but which he will discover to be much harder to achieve than he had anticipated.

A large part of this essay is devoted to a consideration of the 'moral teaching of Jesus', and Hegel revises his earlier Kantian interpretations. He takes some examples from the Sermon on the Mount which Kant had also discussed.<sup>25</sup> "The commandment to love thy neighbour as thyself", he writes "was quite wrongly regarded by Kant as a command requiring respect for a law which commands duty".<sup>26</sup> Love in Hegel's view is above law and cannot

21. Kaufmann op. cit., p. 41.

22. In his Leben Jesu and earlier fragments Hegel's defence of autonomy is of an even more radical and atheistic tone. See Kaufman op. cit. p. 58 ff.

23. ETW, p.212.

24. Ibid. Translator's note.

25. In 'Religion within the bounds of Mere Reason'.

26. ETW p.213.



be commanded.

"His [Kant's] remark that "love", or to take the meaning which he thinks must be given to this love, "liking to perform all duties", "cannot be commanded" falls to the ground by its own weight, because in love all thought of duty vanishes". (ibid).

Hegel describes love not as a duty or a dictate of reason, but as a "modification of life".<sup>27</sup> He uses the term 'life' in its biblical sense, and to designate (more or less) what he would later call Spirit. The term 'modification' means, according to Knox, "expressing itself in a particular mode",<sup>28</sup> and corresponds to the term 'moment' in Hegel's later work: Love is a moment of Spirit. Since Spirit is free, this means that love is sovereign over duty, in much the same sense as a sovereign or sovereign body in politics is above the law.<sup>29</sup> Comparing Christ's teaching with Moses' (who is now more or less identified with Kant), Hegel writes

"Over against the *dutiful* fidelity in marriage and the *right* to divorce a wife, Jesus sets *love*. Love precludes the lust not forbidden by duty and, except in one eventuality cancels this leave to divorce, a leave contradictory to duty. Hence, on the one hand, the sanctity of love is the completion of the law against divorce ... On the other hand love cancels the leave to divorce and in face of love, so long as it lasts, or even when it ceases, there can be no talk of leave or rights ... But in the eventuality which Jesus made an exception (ie. when the wife has bestowed her love on another) the husband may not continue as a slave to her. Moses had to give laws and rights about marriage to the Jews 'because of the hardness of their hearts', but in the beginning it was not so". (ETW p. 217; all emphasis in quotations is the author's).

Laws, in other words, are made for men, and not men for laws.<sup>30</sup>

27. Ibid, p. 212.

28. Ibid.

29. Cf. Aristotle Politics, Penguin 1972 p. 61, Bk II Ch. 4, or Plato Republic, 425 c - which passage is referred to directly by Hegel in his Jena essay on Natural Law p. 102. Hegel's notion of the priority of love gives it sovereignty only in the sense implied by these authors, not the modern sense in which sovereignty is essentially individual. It is the form of love, not the loving person, which is supreme. Hegel, as we will see, rejects this romantic view later. The sovereignty of love is expressed by Bernard Crick in In Defence of Politics (Pelican 1964, p.26): "Politics and love are the only forms of constraint possible between free people". We may also cite the expression "all is fair in love and war."

30. Phenomenology, p. 387.

To make love, or any other 'modification of life' sovereign over duty is to invert Kant and to introduce a new notion of the Absolute. Precisely in being sovereign, and therefore independent, not relative to any other being, life becomes Absolute. The Absolute is no longer the empty autonomy of Fichtes  $I = I$ ,<sup>31</sup> but the concrete freedom<sup>32</sup> of life and its modifications, or what Hegel later terms Spirit. Love, for example exists, but is not compelled to exist, and nor is there any reason for it to exist (at least not in Hegel's view, since if there were it would become relative to this reason and lose its sovereignty). This in turn means that it is something both ethical and Divine (unless it is absurd, which is not Hegel's intention). In the Jena essay on Natural Law Hegel criticises Fichte's system for having no need for religion and ethics, and he seems to hold the same view here.<sup>33</sup> I do not therefore agree with commentators who play down the religious content and aim of the Early Theological Writings or, for that matter, of Hegel's later works.<sup>34</sup> It may be true that Hegel always retains an element

31. Fichtes  $I = I$  is, of course, a version of the noumenal self in Kant. It also reappears in another guise in Sartre's work as the "Pre-Reflective Cogito". See Sartre, Being and Nothingness, Methuen 1969, pp. xxvi - xxxii. Many of Hegel's criticism of Fichte are equally applicable to Sartre.
32. The term 'concrete freedom', though widely used by Hegel and his followers, is not easy to define. Hegel gives a characteristically cryptic definition in Natural Law (p. 90), calling it simply "the freedom of the individual".
33. Hegel, Natural Law, p. 85. Later, in the Aesthetics, Hegel wrote that "the ethical (*sittlich*) is the divine of religion as action". See Kaufmann, op. cit. p. 274.
34. Lukács for example, describes Hegel's early theological period as "a reactionary legend created and fostered by the reactionary apologists of imperialism" (Op. cit. p. 16), and Kaufmann also more or less denies any serious theological intent in the Early Theological Writings (Lukács, The Young Hegel, Merlin 1975, Part I, Ch I; Kaufmann, Hegel op. cit. Ch.I). Lauer and Harris agree that in his early years Hegel's ideal was a religious one. See Q. Lauer, A Reading of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit, New York, 1976, p. 23.

of paganism, but except perhaps in his youth he is always profoundly religious, and his work cannot be understood except as having a religious purpose.

In Part (iii) of the Spirit of Christianity, titled "Love as the Transcendence of Penal Justice and the Reconciliation of Fate", Hegel tries to put some flesh on his new conception of the Absolute, contrasting virtue and duty - as he did later in Natural Law,<sup>35</sup> and again in the Phenomenology. In contrast to the Kantian view which sees freedom as self-determination in contrast to being determined by one's inclinations, that is as duty, Hegel defines Freedom as "the 'or' in 'virtue or vice'".<sup>36</sup> He goes on to explain the contrast between his view and Kant's as follows:

"In the opposition of law to nature, of the universal to the particular, both opposites are posited, are actual, the one is not unless the other is. In the moral freedom which consists in the opposition of virtue to vice, the attainment of one is the exclusion of the other; and, hence, if one is actual the other is only possible". (ETW p. 225).

Virtue, then, allows the real possibility of good actions, while duty only produces a conflict with its opposite, passion.<sup>37</sup> What is absolute is not duty, a form of reason, but the good, which is, as Hegel was to argue more explicitly later, a form of the divine.<sup>38</sup>

Of course, Hegel does not rest his case here. Religion is subordinate to philosophy, and what religion dictates, philosophy must be capable of *knowing*. That is, knowledge of the good must not be a passive acceptance of a positive teaching, but must include what Hegel later calls 'the subjective element'.<sup>39</sup>

35. Hegel, Natural Law, pp. 114-115. Phenomenology, pp. 365-409.

36. ETW p. 225.

37. ETW p. 225.

38. In the Aesthetics. See note 33 above.

39. Hegel, Philosophy of Right, trans. T.M.Knox, O.U.P. 1967, p. 74.

of conscience. It is in order to establish this that Hegel goes on to discuss punishment and Fate. In the Kantian scheme of things, punishment is an unfortunate necessity. In a perfect world all men would be reasonable and therefore moral, and there would be no need for any use of force.<sup>40</sup>

However, while all would be harmony so long as men consent to be reasonable it is also the case that men are always free to be unreasonable and to follow the dictates of passion. In Kant's own words, "Man is an animal who needs a master".<sup>41</sup> Power, therefore, is added in as an adjunct to and servant of reason, which itself has no power, indeed, as pure abstract thought, is the exact opposite of power.

Hegel has argued that love is above the Mosaic version of moral law. He now argues that it is above penal law too, so that moral and penal law become likewise moments of love. Rather than being the opposite of moral law, penal law becomes its essential concomitant, so that reason and power become friends.<sup>42</sup>

The proof of this lies for Hegel in the representation of punishment as the reconciliation of Fate. If we consider punishment superficially, that is, from the standpoint of penal law only, we find that the criminal and the law are directly opposed to one another. In being punished

"The trespasser is not reconciled with the law, whether ( $\alpha$ ) the law is in his eyes something alien or whether ( $\beta$ ) it is present in him subjectively as a bad conscience". (ETW, p. 227).

40. See 'Perpetual Peace' in Kant's Political Writings, edited by Reiss, O.U.P. 1970.

41. I.Kant, "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose" in H.Reiss ed. Kant's Political Writings, Cambridge U.P. 1970, p. 46.

42. Later in Natural Law, Hegel counterposes to the rationalist view that punishment can only be justified if it produces a rational and moral result i.e. reform, the idea that retribution is not only a good ground for punishment, but also constitutes its "rational element" (Natural Law, p. 92).

In the first case, like Ismene in Sophocles' Antigone, he respects the law only out of fear of punishment, and will be inclined to break the law if he thinks he can evade detection. In the second case, he may suffer guilt for his transgression, since he acknowledges that it offends moral as well as penal law. In this case, however, punishment serves only to confirm his own feeling of guilt. If moral and penal law are to be reconciled as modifications of love, it is necessary that punishment be capable of making men, good, of reconciling the individual to the universal law.

"There can be no other cancellation (of punishment) so long as punishment has to be regarded solely as something absolute, so long as it is unconditional, or so long as it has no aspect from which both it and what conditions it can be seen to be subordinate to a higher sphere. Law and punishment cannot be reconciled, but they may be transgressed if fate can be reconciled". (ETW, p. 228).

Hence the importance of Fate. Fate, like punishment, inspires fear, but

"this is a feeling quite different from the fear of punishment. The former is a fear of a separation, an awe of *one's self*; fear of punishment is fear of something alien, for even if the law is known as one's own, still in the fear of punishment the punishment is something alien unless the fear is conceived as fear of being unworthy". (ETW p, 229).

The 'awe of one's self' is the subjective element we are looking for, but it is not quite the same as what is ordinarily understood by conscience.

Rather than being purely subjective, if it is represented as fate it implies a recognition of a higher ethical power than one's own subjective conscience.

Banquo's ghost is not simply a product of Macbeth's guilty conscience, in Hegel's reading, but represents "the power of life made hostile".<sup>43</sup> Antigone, to cite another example, buries her brother not simply because her conscience tells her to do so, but because she knows she pleases where she must please

43. ETW, p. 231. Banquo's ghost, on the other hand, exists only for Macbeth. In this fact we see the subjective principle which is found only in the modern conception of tragic fate; but Hegel has not yet distinguished the ancient and modern notions of fate.



the most, that is, presumably, with the gods of the divine law.<sup>44</sup> In short, Hegel argues that if we accept the notion of Fate which we find in the great tragedies, it is possible for the individual to be reconciled with the law, while if we do not we are left in a Hobbesian world where law is merely universal and self-willed particular individuals are always opposed to it.

To accept the notion of Fate, therefore, is to reject reformatory views of punishment associated with enlightenment rationalism.<sup>45</sup> However, as Hegel argues later in his essay, it is not necessarily to accept the romantic view expressed by Hölderlin in the notion of the 'beautiful soul'.<sup>46</sup> The beautiful soul acknowledges the power of fate but attempts to escape it by holding aloof from mundane things, in order to be able to maintain a good conscience. This view Hegel holds to be little better than Kant's, being simply the direct opposite of a guilty conscience. It is not capable of recognising sin in itself, and therefore it is not open to forgiveness, so that there can be no reconciliation. Hegel counterposes to this hard-heartedness the Christian view "judge not that ye be not judged; with what ye measure ye mere, it shall be measured to you again."<sup>47</sup>

Fate, then, is the principle of conscience represented as something real, not as the abstractions of duty or the beautiful soul. It is a recognition

44. Sophocles, Antigone l. 89.

45. See note 42 above.

46. ETW p. 236. Hegel returns to this theme in the closing pages of the chapter on Spirit in the Phenomenology in a section titled 'The beautiful soul; evil and its forgiveness'.

47. ETW p. 237; Matthew, vii, 1-2.

by the individual of the Absolute, and it becomes a central notion of the Phenomenology. It is never represented as an alien power, but always as something subjective, and without the subjective element it is of no value. To interpret Hegel's notion of reconciliation with fate as simply an acceptance of the inevitable,<sup>48</sup> a mere 'fatalism', is to misunderstand the positive value of reconciliation - and to go so far as to say that in Hegel's view "the absolute moral authority of the state ... overrules all personal morality, all conscience", as Karl Popper does,<sup>49</sup> is to display an extraordinary ignorance of Hegel's work, since the notion of conscience is always one of Hegel's central concerns.

The essay on the Spirit of Christianity and its Fate contains a number of themes which stay with Hegel throughout its life. However, there are also a number of important questions which it does not raise and which Hegel does not raise until he left Frankfurt. In particular, we should note (1) that he has made no distinction as yet between the ancient and modern conceptions of fate:<sup>50</sup> (2) that he talks of moral and penal law, and has not yet distinguished the ancient and modern versions of this, that is human and divine law from natural and civil law; and (3) that although he distinguishes *Moralität* from *Sittlichkeit* he nevertheless maintains that a morality of

48. Lukács, The Young Hegel, p. 98, p. 502, and elsewhere, and Plant, Hegel p. 71, seem to suggest this line of interpretation.

49. Karl Popper, The Open Society and its Enemies, London 1966, Volume 2 p. 31. Kaufmann has effectively argued the case against taking Popper at all seriously on Hegel in an essay titled "The Hegel Myth and its Method" in A. MacIntyre (ed.) Hegel, University of Notre Dame Press.

50. Hegel gives a concise summary of his mature view of the difference between ancient and modern conceptions of Necessity, as Fate and Consolation respectively in a Zusatz to §147 of the Lesser Logic (Logic, Clarendon 1975, pp. 209-10).



conscience is compatible with a pagan folk religion, whereas he will later abandon folk religion in favour of a revised version of Christainity, and will argue bluntly that the Greeks "had no conscience".<sup>51, 52</sup>

In January 1801 Hegel moved to Jena, "to take up his place beside Schelling as a champion of the Philosophy of Identity".<sup>53</sup> He had lived through the crucial years of the formation of his thought and had in his last year at Frankfurt produced the first sketch of his system. He had not achieved this without great effort. His sister records that he had become silent and self-absorbed,<sup>54</sup> and Hegel later referred to this period as a five year depression which went "to the paralysis of all powers".<sup>55</sup> In a letter of 1810 he wrote:

"I know from my own experience this state of mind or rather the moral reason once it has ventured with its interest and its fears into the chaotic realm of the phenomenal world ... inwardly certain of its goal but as yet unclear and unspecific about it as a whole. I suffered from this hypochondria for a number of years to the point of total exhaustion; no doubt every man experiences such a turning-point in his life, the nocturnal point where his whole being contracts and he must force himself through the narrows until he becomes

51. Hegel, Philosophy of History, trans. Sibree, Dover Publications Inc. 1956, p. 253.
52. In the essay on Natural Law (Pennsylvania 1975 p. 105 ff) written at Jena in 1802 Hegel makes all these distinctions, except for human and divine law, but is still a long way from the developed views set out in the Phenomenology. Since my aim here is not to chronicle Hegel's development, but to discover in more general terms what his preoccupations were in the period leading up to the production of the Phenomenology, I do not intend to discuss exactly what Hegel has and has not established by 1802, but to move more directly to his mature view, which is established by the publication of the Phenomenology. Some of Hegel's positions in Natural Law are set out in Ch. 2 below.
53. E.Caird, Hegel, W. Blackwood & Sons 1883, p. 47.
54. Ibid p.45.
55. Kojève, Introduction to the Reading of Hegel, Basic Books Inc. 1969, p. 168.

secure and certain of himself, secure in ordinary daily life, and if he has already made himself incapable of being fulfilled by that, then secure in a more inward, more noble existence". (Lukacs; The Young Hegel, op. cit. p. 102)

At Jena from 1801 to 1803 Hegel published seven essays - his first publications.<sup>56</sup> They cover quite varied themes, and each of them consolidates and develops in some way ideas which will recur in the Phenomenology. He then published nothing until the Phenomenology itself in 1807. I do not intend to discuss any of these essays in any detail here.<sup>57</sup> Instead, I want to record some of the details of Hegel's association with Schelling which was finally and abruptly ended by Hegel's criticism of Schelling in the Preface to the Phenomenology. I hope in this way to follow more directly the development of Hegel's notion of the Absolute, which is my main concern here.

56. Except for an anonymous translation which was published while Hegel was at Frankfurt. See Kaufmann, op. cit, p. 65.

57. Kaufmann, op. cit, Ch. II, gives a brief account of the content of each of these essays. Natural Law which is probably the most important if least clearly written of these essays has been translated by Knox and published by the University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975.

The Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's Systems of Philosophy and Faith and Knowledge have both been translated by W.Cerf and H.S.Harris, and published separately by Albany Press, 1977.

Hegel's essay on the 'Difference of the Fichtean and Schellingean System of Philosophy' was first published in 1801, very shortly before Schelling and Fichte, who had been close associates, abruptly fell out with each other - just as abruptly as Fichte had earlier fallen out with Kant, and Schelling would later fall out with Hegel. Kaufmann<sup>58</sup> attributes the emotional nature of this series of friendships to the ambition Kant had set for his followers in the last sentence of the Critique of Pure Reason. This reads:

"If the reader has had the courtesy and patience to accompany me along this path, he may now judge for himself whether, if he cares to lend his aid in making this path into a high-road, it may not be possible to achieve before the end of the present century what many centuries have not been able to accomplish; namely, to secure for human reason complete satisfaction in regard to that with which it has all along so eagerly occupied itself, though hitherto in vain (Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, Trans. Norman Kemp Smith, MacMillan 1933, p.669).

Certainly there is a strong millenarian tendency in Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel which could account for their ambivalent relationships with each other.

Fichte's work has been described as a step away from Enlightenment towards the philosophical romanticism of Schelling via the Storm and Stress movement.<sup>59</sup> In the 'Difference' essay, which is ostensibly a review of Reinhold, Hegel compares Fichte to Schelling quite neutrally, finding merit in both views, though perhaps tending to support Schelling.<sup>60</sup> The issue centres on the philosophy of Nature. Fichte has retained the Enlightenment principle of individual autonomy in philosophy of Nature by asserting that "the Ego is everything". Schelling adds to this the reply that "everything is Ego", that

58. Kaufmann op. cit. p.121 ff.

59. Kroner, Introduction to ETW p.14.

60. Kroner, op. cit. p.22, Caird, op. cit. p.48.

is, "that nature is no unreal shadow of the movement of subjective thought, but has manifested in it the very principle which constitutes the Ego in man"<sup>61</sup>

Just before he left Frankfurt, Hegel showed that he was reluctant to take sides on this issue, though also implying that he tends towards Schelling.<sup>62</sup> However, by the next year, when he began publishing the Critical Journal in conjunction with Schelling, he is less ambivalent. The programme of the Journal (which was written mostly by Hegel, though individual authorship was not usually credited) states unequivocally that

"the great immediate interest of philosophy is to put God again absolutely at the head of the system as the one ground of all, the *principium essende et cognoscendi*, after He has for a long time been placed, either as one finitude alongside of other finitudes, or at the end of them all as a postulate - which necessarily implies the absoluteness of the finite". (Caird, op. cit. p. 50).

Hegel now sides with Schelling taking up the Spinozist view (which Hegel criticised explicitly later in the lesser Logic)<sup>63</sup> in which the Absolute is Substance,<sup>3</sup> not, as in Fichtes view, Subject. Nature and Ego are not so much opposites, as two moments of the divine.

Hegel maintained this view throughout his life, to the annoyance of some commentators who see in it an absurd anthropomorphism,<sup>64</sup> and to the delight of others who find in it a preview of Engels' Dialectic of Nature.<sup>65</sup> However, he soon begins to find Schelling's version of the philosophy of Nature superficial, just as he earlier criticised Fichte's philosophy of nature on

61. Caird, op.cit. p. 50.

62. ETW, p. 319, in the 'Fragment of a System'.

63 Hegel, Logic (of Encyclopaedia) Oxford 1975, p. 213 §151.

64. See Alexandre Kojève, op. cit. p. 212.

65. G. Lukács, op. cit, p. 440.

the same grounds.<sup>66</sup> His Jena lectures and aphorisms make some fairly sharp criticisms of Schelling's ideas,<sup>67</sup> though they were directed more at Schelling's followers than Schelling himself - which Hegel also claimed, implausably, to be true of his comments in the Preface to the Phenomenology. Specifically, he begins to see Schelling's notion as increasingly formal,<sup>68</sup> and that his representation of the absolute as substance is just as much an abstraction from reality as Fichte's representation of it as subject. Schelling's philosophy of nature therefore becomes empty and pretentious. Where there is a real phenomenon, Schelling seeks to distinguish this from the element of the absolute manifested within it and to say that it is not knowledge of the phenomenon itself which is true, but only the recognition of the substantial absolute within it. It is easy in this way, Hegel jibes, to sound profound. 'For example, instead of saying something is *long*, say it has *length*, and that this length is *magnetism*; instead of saying *broad*, say it has *breadth* and that is *electricity* ... and so on."<sup>69</sup>

Schelling's absolute, then, though substantial, remains equally rational. It is supposed that substance may be deduced from the abstract absolute expressed in the formula  $A=A$ . In Hegel's view, even if any such deduction were possible, it could never go beyond pure reason to become a true knowledge of phenomenal reality, and remain at best an explanation of reality which reduces to a tautology, such as "long is length" in the above quotation. Thus he writes in the Preface to the Phenomenology:

66. Hegel, Natural Law, p.56.

67. See Rosenkranz, Hegel's Leben, supplementary volume to Werke Berlin 1844. Some of these remarks can be found in translation in Lukacs, op cit, p.428, and Kaufmann, op cit, p.179 ff.

68. "Formal" - see Phenomenology p.30.

69. From Jena Lectures. See Lukács: p.428. This theme is repeated more concisely in the Phenomenology p.30 §51.

"Dealing with something from the perspective of the Absolute (in the modern view) consists merely in declaring that, although one has been speaking of it just now as something definite, yet in the Absolute, the A=A, there is nothing of the kind, for there all is one. To pit this single insight, that in the Absolute everything is the same, against the full body of articulated cognition, which at least seeks and demands such fulfilment, to palm off its Absolute as the night in which, as the saying goes, all cows are black - this is cognition naively reduced to vacuity". (Phenomenology, p.9)

A little further on Hegel expresses his aim of transcending both Fichte's and Schelling's views in the direction of reality in a well known passage:

"In my view, which can be justified only by the exposition of the system itself, everything turns on grasping and expressing the True not only as *Substance*, but also as *Subject*". (Phenomenology, p.10)

This unity of Substance and Subject, Hegel remarks later, is found in the need to express the Absolute as God, that is as a subject which absolutely requires but is equally distinct from predicates, that is a substantial being which is known.<sup>70</sup>

This represents formally Hegel's final view of the matter. Hegel has moved beyond Fichte and Schelling to a position which is both more and less rationalist. That is, Hegel has rejected the idea that there can be any analytical deduction of the world from some absolute premise, so is less rationalist, but instead holds that the world is itself nothing but reason and that reason is prior to phenomenal existence.<sup>71</sup> He later described his Greater Logic (to which the Phenomenology was conceived as an introduction) as "*the account of God, as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of the world and any finite Spirit*".<sup>72</sup> Because of this view of logic Hegel has been called

70. Phenomenology, p.12

71. We will return to the question of whether the Phenomenology can be said in any sense to be a deduction in Chapter 3 below. Michael Rosen in Hegel's Dialectic and its Criticism, C.U.P. 1982 discusses this question in some detail.

72. In the Introduction to the Science of Logic, op. cit. p.60; Kaufmann, p.195.



an archrationalist, but Glockner's term 'panlogist' better captures the flavour of Hegel's position.<sup>73</sup> Hegel's rationalism is quite different from what is ordinarily understood by the term. The "Logos" of "panlogosim" is not what is merely logical or abstractly rational, but something much more concrete, the "word", or "*Noûs*", as Anaxagoras first recognised the essence of things to be".<sup>74</sup>

Thus Hegel argues that the Absolute is not so much a premise, as it is for rationalism in general, as it is a result.

"The True is the Whole. But the whole is nothing other than the essence consummating itself through its development. Of the Absolute it must be said that it is essentially a *result*, that only in the *end* is it truly what it is" (Phenomenology, p. 11) 75

The statement may seem contradictory. How can something which is Absolute be the result of something else without at the same time being dependent on and relative to that which caused it, and therefore no longer Absolute? How can Hegel escape either on the one hand a historical relativism which asserts that what is true is what happens to exist, or on the other hand an essentialism which interprets the 'result' as predetermined by a specific and structured essence? Hegel has been criticised for holding both these

73. On Panlogism see Hyppolite op. cit. p. 50, Kaufmann op. cit. p. 435. and John 1,i.
74. Phenomenology, p. 34. *Noûs* is normally translated as Spirit, but Hegel always leaves it untranslated, presumably to distinguish it from his own view. See Kaufmann, op. cit, p. 160. In the Philosophy of History (op. cit. p.11) Hegel equates *Noûs* with "Understanding generally, or Reason", and distinguishes this from "intelligence as self-conscious Reason - Spirit as such".
75. Since the Absolute is essentially a result, we must reject Charles Taylors interpretation, that Hegel's Absolute *generates* all reality. This separates reality and the Absolute too sharply for Hegel. Even Plato holds only that his world of forms makes reality possible, not that it generates it. (Charles Taylor, Hegel, Cambridge, 1977, p. 127).



views.<sup>76</sup>

Perhaps Hegel never reconciles these two alternatives. However, there can be no doubt but that he is trying and is aware of the pitfalls of each alternative.<sup>77</sup> In order to judge we need first to see the problems that are thrown up. Schelling's philosophy of Nature, in common with the general trend of romanticism, looks back to classical Greek philosophy which regards nature as a realisation of an ideal form, and holds at the same time that it is purely rational in the sense of Spinozist Substance. This implies that he has misunderstood the classical notion of ideal form, since though it holds form to be rational it absolutely opposes the notion that it may be deduced in some quasi-mathematical way, and holds instead that form exists prior to reality, and may be known or discovered by reasonable men, but not deduced.

In order, therefore, to get further with Schelling's mixing of ancient and modern principles in the philosophy of nature, it is first necessary to distinguish better the two views, in order to attempt a synthesis which is not just a romantic revival of greek ideals, and which does not presuppose the compatibility of greek ideas with modern ones. The relationship of greek to modern ideas and the dangers of anachronism involved in attempting to use both becomes a central question, and a thorough reappraisal of the meaning of ancient philosophy is necessary.

76. Karl Popper criticises Hegel vociferously on *both* counts, seemingly unaware that the two views are opposed to each other. (K. Popper. The Open Society and its Enemies, Vol. 2)

77. See Phenomenology, p.11, §20.

Hegel begins to tackle this problem by introducing, in a passage which immediately follows his assertion that the 'True is the whole', a terminology which he believes is capable of accommodating ancient ideas within a modern framework. In particular he introduces the notion of "mediation", (which as several commentators have pointed out characterises Hegel's method much more aptly than the often cited term 'dialectic')<sup>78</sup> and the related ideas of immediacy, being-in-itself, and being-for-itself. These terms allow Hegel to adopt the classical doctrine of essence, but without the notion of determinism which is normally associated with it, and including certain subjective dimensions required by modern thought. The term being-in-itself, for example, has obvious connections with Kant's thing in itself, but it is by no means a 'noumenal' existence, but rather an 'immediate' one. On the other hand, if it is not noumenal, it is not exactly what the ancients meant by 'essential' either. In the ancient view, essence is prior to existence, which implies that it is not part of the essence of an idea that it should exist. There is not just form, but a world of forms which has no innate need to exist, and yet which is the cause of any real existence. Hegel's being-in-itself is not essential in this sense, but 'implicit' or as he says 'immediate'. For Hegel, essence must exist. Being-in-itself has no priority over being-for-itself, and it is included in the notion of being-in-itself or immediate being that it must also be for itself or mediated. Further, the relationship between being-in-itself and being-for-itself is not one of determinism, but of mediation, that is of the opposite of determinism, thought or freedom. Hegel expresses his view in the following passage.

78. See Kojève, Introduction to the Reading of Hegel, Basic Books, Ch. 7, and W.Kaufmann, op. cit. Section 37, pp.167-175, and pp. 433-5.

"Mediation is nothing beyond self-moving, self-sameness, or is reflection into self, the moment of the 'I' which is for itself pure negativity or, when reduced to its pure abstraction, *simple becoming*. The 'I' or becoming in general, this mediation, on account of its simple nature is just immediacy in the process of becoming, and is the immediate itself. Reason is therefore misunderstood when reflection is excluded from the True, and is not grasped as a positive moment of the Absolute. It is reflection that makes the True a result, but it is equally reflection that overcomes the antithesis between the process of its becoming and the result, for this becoming is also simple, and therefore not different from the form of the True which shows itself as *simple* in its result; the process of becoming is rather just this return into simplicity. Though the embryo is indeed *in itself* a human being, it is not so *for itself*; this it is only as cultivated Reason, which has *made* itself into what it is in itself. And that is when it for the first time is actual. But this result is itself a simple immediacy, for it is self-conscious freedom at peace with itself, which has not set the antithesis on one side and left it there, but has been reconciled with it." (Phenomenology, p. 12.)

The difficulty of relating ancient to modern ideas without anachronism is not just to be found at this metaphysical level. Indeed, the impetus moving Hegel to consider the problem in philosophical terms probably came from elsewhere. In 1799 he wrote to Schelling thus:

"In my scientific education, which began with the endeavour to to satisfy humbler wants, I have been driven onward to philosophy, and *the ideal of youth has thus of necessity had to take on the form of reflection and transform itself into a system*". (Caird, op.cit, p.46)

Hegel does not forget these humbler wants, and before going on to consider the Phenomenology more directly I want to look specifically at the impetus towards reconsidering the relationship of ancient and modern ideals which comes from romantic views of politics.<sup>79</sup>

79. And from ethics, in so far<sup>as</sup> ethics and politics are only vaguely distinguished in both enlightenment and romantic thought. Politics is generally accounted as an application of ethical principles in government - as if government had no ethics of its own and needs a philosopher to provide it. See for example Kant's essay on Perpetual Peace, which prescribes ethical principles for diplomacy while happily acknowledging that politicians are very likely to ignore them, and which Hegel jibes at in Natural Law, op cit p.93. (Kant, Perpetual Peace, in Reiss (ed) Kant's Political Writings, p.93).

The political event which dominated Hegel's youth was, of course, the French Revolution.<sup>80</sup> However, in spite of his initial support for the Revolutionaries, Hegel seems fairly quickly to have qualified his support quite extensively, especially after the experience of Thermidor 1794.<sup>81</sup> In any case, in the Jena article on Natural Law we find a sharp criticism of the political theory which lay behind the revolution (and "we should not contradict the assertion that the Revolution received its first impulse from Philosophy"),<sup>82</sup> that is, the notion of the 'general will'.<sup>83</sup>

The political theory of the general will must be accounted as a reaction to the rationalist political theories of, say, Hobbes or Kant, which has much in common with romantic reactions to enlightenment thought in other areas.

80. It is well known that Hegel finished the Phenomenology on the same day and virtually in the same place as Napoleon ("the World-Soul on Horseback") finished the Holy Roman Empire by defeating the Prussian army at the Battle of Jena.
81. Lukács, perhaps wanting to portray Hegel as a good Stalinist, disputes this. "He welcomed the reprisals directed against the followers of Robespierre, but this does no more than confirm the distance separating him from the extreme plebian ring of the French Revolution. But we cannot detect any change in his republican and revolutionary views after Thermidor". (Lukács op. cit. p. 93) Cf by contrast R. Plant, Hegel op. cit. p. 72.
82. Hegel, Philosophy of History, Dover 1956, p. 446. Of course, the extent to which this is actually true has been disputed, and certainly one must generalise to reach the interpretation of the French Revolution which Hegel suggests. See Knox's note in Hegel's Philosophy of Right, op. cit. p. 263.
83. Although this theory is most often associated with Rousseau, whom Hegel had read with enthusiasm at Tübingen, Hegel discusses only Fichte's version of it in Natural Law. However, in the relevant passage of the Phenomenology he appears to have Rousseau in mind.

In Rousseau's writing, for example, we find a typically romantic idealisation of classical virtues of citizenship and the harmonious community of the *polis*, and a corresponding deprecation of the fragmentation of the modern community. Thus he writes

"We have amongst us physicians, geometers, chemists, astronomers, poets, musicians and painters, but no citizens". (Rousseau, Discourses, Quoted by R.Plant, op. cit, p.25.)

And in The Social Contract he has this to say about modern political theory, perhaps with Hobbes' resolute-compositive method especially in mind:

"It is said that Japanese montebanks can cut up a child under the eyes of spectators, throw the different parts up in the air, and then make the child come down all of a piece. This more or less the trick our political theorists perform - after dismembering the social body with a sleight of hand worthy of the fairground, they put all the pieces back together again anyhow. (J.J.Rousseau, The Social Contract, Penguin 1968 p.71.)

Hölderlin used very similar language later in Hyperion, comparing the contemporary Germany to ancient Greece.

"I can think of no people so torn apart as the Germans. Craftsmen are to be seen, but no human beings ... masters and men, but no human beings; young people and old, but no human beings. Is it not like a field of battle where hands and arms and other limbs lie scattered in pieces, while the blood of life drains away in the soil?" (From Hyperion, quoted in Plant, op. cit. p.19) 83b

The ideal of the general will is more or less self consciously an attempt to recapture the unity and harmony of greek life - or in Rousseau's case, more specifically of the life of early republican Rome, and to a certain extent of the small independent Swiss cantons in which he was brought up. In essence, the theory suggests that if in an active political community people discuss and promote actively the good of the community as a whole, rather than any private or factionalised interests, then a truly democratic and harmonious community will result.

This line of argument, however, has more in common with enlightenment thinking than may at first appear to be the case. It opposes the universal will



to the particular will in just the same way as Kant opposes reason to inclination, and argues, in distinction from Hobbes' view, that it is in willing the universal, not the particular, that true freedom is achieved.<sup>84</sup> This Kantian esteem of the autonomy of reason is also seen in Rousseau's esteem of democracy. Democracy, which is understood in the classical sense of sovereignty of the people rather than in any modern sense of representative democracy, is to be valued because within it the citizens of a polity are sovereign over themselves, or autonomous.<sup>85</sup> Rousseau's popular sovereignty is, of course, just as abstract as Kant's notion of autonomy, since if all people are sovereign over themselves, there is no particular sovereign body, no polity.

According to the political theory of the general will, then, it is argued that so long as men remain reasonable, that is, consider only the universal interests of the community as a whole, and hold their irrational private interests in check, then a harmonious polity will result. If instead they further private interests, they demonstrate that they are not truly free, since they are allowing themselves to be determined by their passions.<sup>86</sup>

84. Rousseau stresses that the general will is universal, not merely an aggregate, not the will of all, "There is often a great difference between the will of all and the general will; the general will studies only the common interest while the will of all studies private interest, and is indeed no more than the sum of individual desires" (Rousseau, The Social Contract trans. Cranston, Penguin 1968, p.72.) In willing the general man achieves "moral freedom" (ibid, p.65), while in willing the particular he gains only a worthless "natural freedom" (ibid, p.60).
85. Only gods in fact could govern themselves democratically. "A government so perfect is not suited to men." ibid. p.114.
86. See below Ch.6 for a discussion of Hegel's conception of reason as interested, which allows reason and passion to coexist.



It follows that they must be "forced to be free". This well known lesson of Rousseau's philosophy is one that Robespierre, whom Heine described as "merely the hand of Jean-Jaques Rousseau"<sup>87</sup> learned well and with consequences which Hegel discusses in a central passage in the Phenomenology.<sup>88</sup>

In his essay on Natural Law, Hegel criticises the notion of the general will on two counts. Firstly, he puts forward the *ad hominem* argument that government by the general will cannot in fact be achieved. In the distinction between the general and the particular will, both moments are as real as each other. If they are then set up in opposition to each other there is no ground for asserting that one side can or should win, since they both have the power of being real on their side, and they will therefore simply cancel each other out.<sup>89</sup> A theory of the particular will would be just as good, or just as bad as a theory of the general will, and simply expressing a preference for one or the other does not constitute a valid political theory.

Secondly, Hegel moves on to contrast the general will to the *Sittlichkeit* of classical Greece. He repeats and develops<sup>90</sup> some of the arguments he made in The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate concerning punishment and Fate.

I do not want to rehearse these, but only to note that Hegel opposes *Sittlichkeit* to the general will, whereas supporters of the general will tend to identify

87. Quoted in Ian Gilmore, Inside Right Quartet 1977, p.113.

88. Phenomenology, pp. 355-363.

89. Hegel's Natural Law, op. cit, pp. 84-88.

90. See note 52 above.

it with classical *Sittlichkeit*.<sup>91</sup>

It is possible to interpret classical *Sittlichkeit* as a dominance of reason over the passions. Plato in particular is open to being read as a rationalist in this modern sense. He argues in favour of self-discipline and against granting any value to purely personal interests, in favour of reason and the good of the community, and so on. However, Hegel strongly contests the idea that this is a result of Plato's adhering to a modern conception of reason - and I have no doubt that he is right. He distinguishes the *Sittlichkeit* of the Greeks and the *Moralität* of the Enlightenment as objective and subjective moments of the good, which is prior to both. The *mores* or custom of the polis is not a result of rational deliberation of its members, but is something which exists objectively within the community itself. Rational deliberation can help to know it, but it exists prior to being known in this way.<sup>92</sup> The custom of the community, while not separate from the community, is nevertheless itself an independent living thing; and, just as Hegel earlier argued that love, as a modification of life (or Spirit) was above law and duty, so the custom of the *polis* is above the reasoning of its individual members. As Aristotle put it, with his usual economy, "It is clear that the state [*polis*] is both natural and prior to the Individual"<sup>93</sup>

91. For example Judith Shklar in Men and Citizens, a study of Rousseau's Social Theory. Much contemporary discussion of the notion of democracy also associates the notion of the general will or the utilitarian greatest good with a 'classical theory of democracy' and then counterposes it to the modern 'elite theory' in which democracy is a system of maintaining oligarchy through elections. See for example J. Schumpeter's essay in Quinton, (ed), Political Philosophy, London 1967, or his book Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy (Allen and Unwin 1943), and Carole Pateman, Participation and Democratic Theory, C.U.P, 1970.

92. This is why in Meno, Plato suggests that it may not be possible to teach virtue. It is prior to knowledge. See Plato, Protagoras and Meno, trans W.K.L. Guthrie, Penguin, 1956.

93. Aristotle, Politics, Penguin 1962, p.29.

The general will, however, cannot ever achieve this independence, since it is always the result of the individual wills of the members of the community. It is, as Hegel argued later, not the absolutely rational will, but simply the individual will universalised.<sup>94</sup> It is simply universal, while the rational will must be individual, that is include also a moment of particularity, or, better, it must be sovereign. Hegel therefore rejects the metaphor of the social contract altogether, since by making *Sittlichkeit* not natural but artificial and subsequent to the wills of the members of the community, it is quite unable to grasp the notion of the will of the community as a sovereign will. Yet without a sovereign will the community is only an abstract existence, aggregation or group with no specific limits, such as a business or any other form of association, but with no individuality or life of its own.<sup>95</sup> The general will is an abstraction which cannot aspire to the living unity of the polis, since it remains entirely subjective.

Nevertheless, Hegel has sometimes been interpreted as following Rousseau in holding that a state governed by a general will would constitute a revival of classical *Sittlichkeit*. Judith Shklar, in her book on the Phenomenology, argues that "the core of Hegel's argument is the identity of the personal goals of the individual citizens and the public ends of the polity as a whole".<sup>96</sup>

94. Hegel, Philosophy of Right, trans. T.M.Knox, OUP 1967 p.33 and p.156-7. Thus, in Hegelian parlance, Rousseau should be reckoned a theorist of subjective freedom, not objective freedom as is sometimes suggested. His conception of freedom is universal, in contrast to the purely particular notion found in Hobbes (eg Leviathan op. cit. p. 261), but is none the less subjective for this.

95. Carole Pateman, in Participation and Democratic Theory (C.U.P. 1970) carries this notion to its conclusion by applying ideas derived from Rousseau and others - what she terms a 'classical theory of democracy' to organisation of 'the workplace' thus divorcing it entirely from government, or rather, indicating that she sees no distinction between the government of a sovereign state and the organisation of a process of work.

96. Judith Shklar, Freedom and Independence A Study of the Political Ideas of Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind, C.U.P. 1976 p.xiv.

She accounts for Hegel's criticism of Rousseau by arguing that he has misunderstood him, taking the general will to be simply "a sum of capricious private wills". Hegel however clearly sees the difference between a majority will and a universal will, and complains only that a universal will is not yet absolutely rational or sovereign. She then argues that Hegel's position is distinguished from Rousseau's only in being more pessimistic. The phenomenology becomes a "Lament for Hellas"<sup>97</sup> that is a lament for that time when universal and particular wills happily coincided, which, in spite of Rousseau's hopes, will never be recovered. Hegel is simply a disillusioned romantic.

In fact, Hegel has no need to be so pessimistic. Precisely because he has distinguished *Sittlichkeit* and *Moralität*, which Rousseau had failed to do and which he himself had failed to do at Berne,<sup>98</sup> Hegel is in a position to consider how it may be possible to get the best of both worlds. This is more or less exactly his aim in the chapter of the Phenomenology on Spirit

However, Hegel also seems to have had history on his side, the French revolution having tested out the theory of the general will in practice. Perhaps this is why he thought, over-optimistically, that the days of the dominion of the 'abstract Absolute' were over in 1831. In the Philosophy of History he distinguishes three moments of the French revolution which fairly clearly support his criticism of Rousseau. In the first place, he sees in the *ancien régime* a merely 'existing Right', that is the objective power of the absolute monarch, with no subjective element of consent. The

97. Ibid. p. 74.

98. See esp. the quotation from ETW p. 154 cited above p. 15.

revolution then introduces the exact opposite, government based on the subjective will, which principle Hegel always supports. The revolutionary constitution is

"in harmony with the conception of Right, and on this foundation all future legislation was to be based. Never since the sun stood in the firmament and the planets revolved around him had it been perceived that man's existence centres in his head, ie in Thought, inspired by which he builds up the world of reality. Anaxagoras had been the first to say that *nous* governs the world; but not until now had man advanced to the recognition of the principle that Thought ought to govern spiritual reality. This was accordingly a glorious mental dawn." (Hegel, Philosophy of History, trans. Sibree, Dover 1956 p.447.)

One vital moment, however, is missing, the moment of power. The fate of the revolutionaries was to learn from experience "the absolute necessity of a governmental *power*." This moment was provided by Napoleon's *coup d'état*.

"Napoleon restored the revolutionary constitution as a military power, and followed up this step by establishing himself as an individual will at the head of the state, he knew who to rule, and soon settled the internal affairs of France. The *advocats*, ideologues and abstract-principle men who ventured to show themselves he sent 'to right about' and the sway of mistrust was exchanged for that of respect and fear". (ibid. p.451.)

I do not want to labour the point further. At every level, in politics, theology, ethics, metaphysics and no doubt elsewhere, the young Hegel turns up very similar problems and is led towards similar conclusions. This occurs on two fronts. Firstly, *pace* Enlightenment, Hegel finds that Reason, not Spirit is taken to be the absolute, and that reason is nevertheless cut off from true reality, and especially from the two dimensions of passion and power, which are included in the notion of Spirit. Secondly, *pace* Romanticism, Hegel finds that classical thought is being appropriated by admirers who do not properly understand what they are appropriating, and do not see that classical thought is in many respects quite different from their own, both in terms of its content, and in terms of the questions it is addressing.



The Phenomenology of Spirit is by no means purely a polemical work. Its aim is quite general, as Hegel implied when he described his aim in the Preface of the Phenomenology: "To help bring philosophy closer to the form of science, to the goal where it can lay aside the title "love of knowing" and become "actual knowing" - that is what I have set myself to do".<sup>100</sup> Nevertheless, I want to argue, the path he takes on this road is conditioned considerably by the perceptions Hegel had of the way in which philosophy was most likely to be led away from this goal - that is, via the abstract Absolute. In order to establish his notion of Truth, Hegel needs to criticise the Enlightenment view, and in order to do this he needs to turn to classical philosophy. In order to do this he needs to evaluate classical philosophy both more accurately and discriminately, and more hermeneutically (in terms of its specific intentions and historical situation), than did his romantically inclined contemporaries. As I will argue in the following chapter, this latter aim especially dominates the Phenomenology.

100. Phenomenology, p.3.



## CHAPTER TWO : Spirit

Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit sets out, amongst other things, to provide a thorough reworking of classical philosophy and to reinterpret its ideas in light of the requirements of a modern world. It focusses especially on the notion of justice, understood as the good in the individual and in the state, and for this reason I want to argue in this chapter that *Hegel's Phenomenology is a reworking of Plato's Republic.*

I do not mean this argument to be taken very literally.<sup>1</sup> Hegel certainly has other intentions, and his interest in classical philosophy is very broad and by no means restricted to Plato, and in fact he seems to have admired Aristotle more.<sup>2</sup> However, where Hegel's contemporaries (and perhaps our own too) tend to see oppositions within classical thought which paralleled divisions in modern thought, Hegel prefers to emphasise the unity of classical thought in opposition to modern thought which is expressed in its collective adherence to the classical doctrine of form. For example, he writes in the History of Philosophy that

1. It is certainly tempting sometimes to find a hidden intention lurking behind Hegel's often darkly obscure writing and to hold this up as a key to illuminating his meaning - but in general this procedure is at best speculative, and often very misleading. See for example Kaufmann's comments on some of Royce's interpretations of the Phenomenology, in Kaufmann, Hegel, op. cit. p. 139-142. On the other hand, as A.N. Whitehead said, "The safest general characterisation of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists in a series of footnotes to Plato", so my thesis is scarcely arcane.
2. Hegel, in Philosophy of History, trans. Sibree, Dover 1956 p. 272, described Aristotle as "the deepest and also the most comprehensive thinker of antiquity". In 1810 the second review of the Phenomenology described Hegel as the "German Aristotle", with some justice. See Kaufmann op. cit. p. 130.

"In the popular misconception, Plato is said to have made the ideal his principle, so that the inward idea creates from itself; according to Aristotle, on the contrary, we are told that the soul is made a *tabula rasa*, receiving all its determinations quite passively from the outside world; and his philosophy is thus mere empiricism - Locke's philosophy at its worst. But we shall see how little this is the case. In fact Aristotle excels Plato in speculative depth, for he was acquainted with the deepest form of speculation - idealism - and in this upholds the most extreme empirical development".  
 (Lectures on the History of Philosophy, London 1894, Volume 2, p. 119)

In arguing that Hegel is focussing on Plato's Republic, I do not therefore mean that he does so to the exclusion of other aspects of classical thought but rather as an example of classical thought applied systematically and rigorously to the field he is concerned with in the Phenomenology.<sup>3</sup>

Hegel's concept of Spirit,<sup>3b</sup> I want to argue, is substantially equivalent to Plato's notion of justice. We will see below the extent to which this fact conditions the structure of the Phenomenology - and the Phenomenology is a work which, for reasons which will become apparent, must be understood in terms of its overall structure. However, although the notions of Spirit and justice are substantially equivalent, there is nevertheless a great difference - literally a world of difference - between them. This difference is expressed in the fact that for Hegel Spirit is above all

3. M.D. Foster, in his excellent study of the Political Philosophies of Plato and Hegel, (Oxford 1935) has investigated the connections between Plato's Republic and Hegel's Philosophy of Right in some detail, and I am greatly indebted to him for much of the material in this chapter. To my knowledge, nobody has investigated the connection between the Republic and the Phenomenology along the same lines; and Foster's work seems not to have achieved the recognition it deserves.
- 3b. A useful discussion of the usages of the term *Geist*, translated here as Spirit, can be found in C.G.Jung, Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, Vol. 9 part 1 of The Collected Works of C.G.Jung, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1959, p. 208ff. The entire essay, titled "On the Phenomenology of Spirit in fairytales" is of interest here.

Freedom,<sup>4</sup> and only subsequently justice; while Plato's notion of justice does not necessarily include the subjective element of freedom at all. This difference conditions Hegel's interpretation of Plato at every level. However, in order to see this it is first necessary to set out the substantial parallel in more detail.

Let us first consider how for Hegel we are to know Spirit. Hegel explicitly rules out two ways in which it might be known, and which ways are held by some philosophers to be the only ways in which anything may be known, that is by analytic or synthetic connection.<sup>5</sup> Synthetic connection, which would define Spirit by attaching to it a finite predicate is ruled out by the notion that the "True is the Whole", and any finite predicate is only a part of the whole, and therefore not true. Analytic connection, which would show what is implied in the notion of Spirit is equally ruled out, since the notion of Spirit in general does not imply any specific manifestation. Hegel makes this point sharply against Schelling in the Preface to the Phenomenology.

4. Hegel is disinclined to define Spirit, presumably because he does not wish to reduce it to any particular predicate. However, in the Philosophy of History, after expressing some reservation and before adding many important qualifications, he says "the essence of Spirit is Freedom". (Hegel, Philosophy of History, Dover inc. 1956, p. 17).

Similarly, in the Philosophy of Mind he says that "the essential, but formally essential, feature of Spirit is Liberty" (Philosophy of Mind, trans. Wallace, Oxford, 1971 p. 15 §382). This is the third volume of Hegel's Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences, and its German title is Philosophie des Geistes. To be consistent with present usage this should be translated as Philosophy of Spirit.)

5. David Hume, Enquiries, ed. L. H. Selbey-Bigge Clarendon Press, 1975, p. 25. "All the objects of human reason or enquiry may naturally be divided into two kinds, to wit, Relations of Ideas, and Matters of Fact".

"Just as when I say 'all animals', this expression cannot pass for a zoology, so it is equally plain that the words 'the Divine' 'the Absolute', 'the Eternal', etc., do not express what is contained within them; and only such words, in fact, do express the intuition as something immediate". (Phenomenology, p. 11).

If there is to be a knowledge which is neither the result of deduction nor the result of observation, it must involve some notion of recognition; that is, there must be some truth which is not empirically observable as truth, but which can nevertheless be recognised and acknowledged as such. This then generates the 'eristic paradox' which Plato examines for example in *Meno*. If I am capable of recognising the truth, I must know what it is in the first place, since otherwise I will not be able to distinguish truth from error. On the other hand, if I know the truth already, I should have no reason to look for it, and there should by rights be no such thing as error.

Plato accommodates this paradox by introducing a third category between truth and error, which he calls *doxa*, that is, opinion or belief.

"as knowledge corresponds to the real, and absence of knowledge necessarily to the unreal, so, to correspond to this intermediate thing, we must look for something between ignorance and knowledge" (Republic, 477b) 6

And a little further on he concludes

"And now what we have found between the two is the faculty we call belief." (Republic, 478d).

6. Plato, Republic, trans. Cornford, Oxford, 1941, p. 180. Cornford, whose translation I have used throughout, translates *doxa* as belief, while I have preferred to use opinion. Where I have given references directly to the Republic I have used the conventional system of referring to the Stephanus edition, whose pagination is included in most later editions of Plato's works.

Opinion is not necessarily inferior to knowledge. If it is a wrong opinion it certainly is, but right opinion (*ortho doxa*) is in practical terms just as valuable as true knowledge. Plato illustrates this in the closing pages of Meno by pointing to virtuous Athenians who must certainly have had a true opinion of what was good and acted in accordance with it, without exactly knowing what it was and being able thereby to pass it on to others. Nevertheless, philosophy, as the etymology of the word implies, is not satisfied even with right opinion and wishes to replace this with knowledge.

Plato gives an illustration of what this means by contrasting opinion and knowledge of beauty.<sup>7</sup> All people hold a more or less right opinion of beauty - that is they recognise certain things to be beautiful. Knowledge of beauty, however, is not acquaintance with beautiful things, but an acquaintance with the form of beauty itself. It is, in Plato's view, the form of beauty itself which is truly real, belonging as it does to the world of forms, while particular beautiful objects belong to the illusory world of appearance. How, then, is it possible to know the form of beauty? It cannot be reduced to any of its predicates or appearances, because in this case the appearance would be what is real, not beauty itself. If, for example, we say that what is beautiful is what gives aesthetic pleasure, then all we have done is to reduce beauty to a modification of pleasure, and we might just as well substitute the term aesthetically pleasurable wherever we find the word beautiful and excise beauty from our language.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand since beauty does not appear except in beautiful objects, we cannot know it without knowing those objects.

7. Republic, 478-9.

8. Cf Phenomenology, p. 5, and p.12-13.



What philosophy - as opposed to *philo doxa* - must therefore do is first of all believe in the form of beauty, that is accept that beauty itself exists, and is not simply a manifestation of some more prosaic and definable existence, and then seek to know this form of beauty through acquaintance with beautiful objects. This may seem an abstract procedure, and is certainly one which can never perfectly be completed, or which is infinite. However, it probably allows a more concrete true knowledge than any theory which rejects the notion of form. Plato's Republic itself is an example of the knowledge it can produce - just as many of Plato's earlier dialogues establish how little can be produced by methods which are apparently more straightforward and down to earth. The Republic seeks from the beginning to know the notion of justice, and finally does so by setting out the ways in which it may appear, so that the philosophical observer who seeks to know justice can become acquainted with its many manifestations and recognise the unitary principle of justice within them. Knowledge, in this way of looking at things, is not the production of something new, but the discovery of what already exists, and Plato therefore argues that "seeking and learning are in fact nothing but recollection."<sup>9</sup>

Hegel operates with exactly this procedure. Each stage in the argument of the Phenomenology is presented as a movement from certainty - which I take to be parallel to right opinion in Plato - to true knowledge. Hegel describes the whole process as recollection,<sup>10</sup> and in the final paragraph of the Phenomenology he reminds us that it is not enough to have understood the moments of the Phenomenology separately. Indeed, this is impossible.

9. Plato, *Meno*, on p. 130 of the Penguin edition of Protagoras and Meno translated by W.K.C. Guthrie 1956. The notion of recollection is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3 below.
10. Phenomenology, p. 17 and p. 492. See also Lukács op.cit. p. 508; Kojève op. cit. p. 142.



To understand them it is necessary to understand each moment as a moment of Spirit, to recognise Spirit in each and to gather together and re-collect the whole 'gallery of images',<sup>11</sup> of Spirit into a unitary form. This form is not created by the knowledge of it, but is distinct from knowledge, which is simply conscious awareness of it.<sup>12</sup> In this sense, the form is "formal" in the Platonic sense of that expression, or in Hegelian language it is the Idea (*Idee*)<sup>13</sup>. It is possible to be acquainted with it (as *das Bekannte*) without yet knowing it philosophically or comprehending it (as *das Erkannte*).<sup>14</sup> It is presumably for this reason that in Faith and Knowledge Hegel includes the notion of faith in truth:

"But in philosophical intercourse 'truth' deserves to be used, not of empirical fact, but solely of the certainty of the eternal, and 'faith' has indeed been generally so used". (Faith and Knowledge, Albany, 1977, p. 124).

If Enlightenment limited true knowledge to Reason, and relegated knowledge of the absolute to faith, Hegel takes the more platonic view that faith and reason need not be regarded as direct opposites, and that both are in fact and in a certain sense essential to true knowledge.<sup>14b</sup>

11. This is Hegel's term. See Phenomenology, p. 492. "Gather together" translates "*Versammeln*", and "re-collect" "*Er-inneren*".

12. It is quite wrong, therefore, to attribute to Hegel the Berkeleyan reduction of being to being known, as Sartre for example does when he accuses Hegel of identifying being and knowledge (Sartre, Being and Nothingness, Methuen 1969, p. 238: cf Phenomenology, p. 144, where Hegel criticises this view. Hegel explicitly rejects "subjective idealism" in several places, and terms his own view by contrast not "objective idealism", but "absolute idealism". See for example the lesser Logic, p. 73.

13. See note 1 to Ch. 3 on the contrast between Platonic form and the Hegelian "Idea".

14. Phenomenology, p.18. See also M. Rosen op. cit. p. 55.

14b. Hegel also expresses this idea in the Differenz essay, where he argued that Philosophy presupposes "the absolute itself; this is the goal that is sought. It is already there; how else could it be sought?" (Kaufmann op.cit. p. 75).

In the Republic, it will be recalled, Plato describes justice first in the community or state,<sup>15</sup> and then in the individual. He divides the state into three classes. These are the Guardians, the gold class according to the 'magnificent myth' or 'convenient fiction',<sup>16</sup> of the myth of the metals, who rule in the deliberative sense; the Auxiliaries or silver class, whose function is to defend the state and to enforce the rule of the Guardians; and finally the productive class of farmers and craftsmen, the iron and bronze classes in the myth of metals.

There are in Plato's view four cardinal virtues which ought to be present in a good state: wisdom, courage, discipline or temperance, and justice. Plato locates these in his ideal state in connection with the three classes and their relationship. Wisdom in the state is found in the Guardian class, since if they are wise then the state will be wise.<sup>17</sup> Courage is likewise the property of the Auxiliaries, since their cowardice or bravery is also the cowardice or bravery of the state.<sup>18</sup> Discipline is not exactly a quality of the third class, but consists in its subordination to the other two, since the state, like an individual, is master of itself where the better part rules the worst.<sup>19</sup> Finally, the state is just in proportion

15. Throughout this discussion of Plato the term 'state' is used in the classical sense of *polis*, meaning the objective structure of the whole community, and not merely that part of it involved in government.

16. 'Magnificent myth' is Sir Desmond Lee's translation, 'convenient fiction' Cornford's: both object explicitly to the previous rendering 'noble lie'.

17. Plato, Republic, 428d

18. Ibid. 429b.

19. Ibid. 431d.

as the parts of the state are kept distinct.

"Where there are three orders ... any plurality of functions or shifting from one order to another is not merely utterly harmful to the community, but one might fairly call it the extreme of wrong doing." (Cornford, op. cit. p. 126; Republic 434c.)

Justice in the individual is in Plato's view analagous to justice in the state. The two in fact go together. By presenting justice in the state first Plato is perhaps implying that the individual can be just only within a just state, which would accord with the general classical notion of the priority of the state over the individual. Nevertheless, he has not been able to describe the just state without borrowing terms normally used to describe individuals, ie. the virtues.<sup>20</sup> The just individual should not be regarded simply as a citizen of a just state. Rather, the just individual and the just state should be regarded as equally valid manifestation of the good. To know the latter is the final aim of the Republic,<sup>21</sup> and in Plato's view of all philosophy, since "the highest object of knowledge is the essential nature of the Good."<sup>22</sup>

Justice in the individual appears as the organisation of the dimensions of the state conceived of as dimensions of the individual soul. The soul has three essential parts. It must have appetite (*Epithumia*), courage (*Andreia*), and reason (*Logos*) - the characteristics, that is, which defined the productive, Auxiliary and Guardian classes respectively. In proportion as these three moments are kept in their proper place in relation to each other, so the individual soul is just.<sup>23</sup>

20. eg. Republic, 430e - 431b.

21. As Cornford says, the discussion extends beyond the human good "to the supreme Form, 'Goodness itself'". (Cornford op.cit. p. 211).

22. Cornford, p. 210, Republic, p. 505a.

23. Republic, 443c.



In his essay on Natural Law, Hegel attempts to interpret modern ethical life along more or less exactly these lines.<sup>24</sup> He identifies three classes, each defined by an element of the Platonic soul. Firstly, there is a warlike class, which class alone constitutes the community as an individual entity above the individual, for "the individual proves his unity with his people unmistakably through the danger of death alone".<sup>25</sup> Hence, if the community which has ethical life is to be a real individual entity, there is a necessity for both peace and war,<sup>26</sup> and for the "absolutely formal virtue of courage" - which Hegel (whose language is at its most perverse in this essay), describes as "the rational relation as subjugation taken up into its concept".<sup>27</sup>

Secondly, corresponding to the appetitive element of the soul, there must be a class of producers and a system of wants - the science of which is

political economy. Hegel stresses that this class, in which individuality finds its strongest expression, must not be allowed to become a "self-constituting and independent power", and "must remain subject to the domination of this relation"<sup>28</sup> - that is of the relation of the system of wants to the community as it serves.

Thirdly, the relation between producing and governing classes must be regulated by law, by universal principles which we may presume, though Hegel is not explicit, correspond to the rational element of the soul.

24. This important passage occurs on pp. 93-105 of Natural Law (op.cit.)

25. Natural Law, op.cit, p. 93

26. It is in connection with this argument that Hegel rejects Kant's notion of 'Perpetual Peace'.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid. p. 94.

Finally, Hegel goes on to stress that in a just community it is not enough to have rational laws. These are simply formal and universal, and they must be applied by individuals who function not just as bureaucratic executors of law, but as individual interpreters, judges, and rulers. Here Hegel quotes directly from Plato:

"It is clear that the art of legislation belongs to kingship. But the best thing is that the man who is wise and kingly, and not the law should rule ... because the law could not completely prescribe with precision what would be most excellent and most just for everybody always". (Natural Law, p. 97) 29

Hegel then goes on to discuss some differences between classes defined in terms of the elements of the soul in the ancient and modern worlds. A central issue is freedom. For Plato and for Aristotle it was clear that only the ruling class has freedom, while the productive classes, who were in any case commonly slaves, had no freedom. Hegel wants to maintain this also of the modern 'bourgeois' class, as he calls it, since "its work concerns the individual and thus does not include the danger of death". Clearly, however, a bourgeois has a freedom which slaves do not enjoy. However, though Hegel certainly recognises this, he does not follow this line of thought much further. He laments the erosion of the distinction between classes in the Roman Empire, and speaks of a reconciliation of the

29. Hegel also cites Plato to the same effect on p. 103 and three more times in a slightly different connection in the passage we are considering. We should note, however, that the platonic rulers are not sovereign in the modern sense, since they do not have the power of constitution making, but only of applying and interpreting law which already exists in the world of forms. Hegel appears in Natural Law to be content with this view. The extent to which he later goes beyond it and distinguishes *Nomos* from *Gesetz* in terms of sovereignty is a question we will return to. See p. 77 ff below, note 81 to this chapter, and Foster op. cit. p. 25.



new bourgeois class to necessity, but there is little sign of his developing the kind of argument which he was later to present in the *Philosophy of Right*, and which I want to argue he develops in Phenomenology. His comparison of the ancient and modern ethical orders seems to be little more than an attempt to juggle with Platonic ideas to try and fit them into an interpretation of a world quite different from the one in which they were developed.

In the Phenomenology, Hegel's position is advanced considerably. In place of the Platonic language we find in Natural Law we find a new terminology which owes as much to Kant as it does to Plato, and it is quite easy to miss the Platonic resonances altogether. Nevertheless, these are still strong. In place of justice in the individual we find what Hegel later termed "subjective Spirit."<sup>30</sup> Like the Platonic soul, subjective Spirit has three moments. These however, appear in a modified form as consciousness, self-consciousness, and Reason.<sup>31</sup> In place of justice in the state we find the notion of "objective Spirit"<sup>32</sup>. As in Plato's view, objective Spirit is the ethical in the objective form of a structured ethical community, and

30. Hegel does not use this term exactly in the Phenomenology, but does in later works such as the Propaedeutic (see Outlines of Hegel's Phenomenology in Jacob Löwenberg (ed.) Hegel Selections, New York 1929 - cited hereafter as Propaedeutic) and the Philosophy of Mind. I do not believe that Hegel substantially altered any of his major positions after he wrote the Phenomenology, and therefore treat it and later works here as equally valid representations of his mature thought.

31. That is, in the Phenomenology. The same division appears in the Encyclopaedia, but does not exhaust subjective Spirit which has three moments, viz, The Soul in itself, the soul realising itself in the individual (the area covered by the Phenomenology and termed "phenomenology" in the Encyclopaedia) and the soul realised in and for itself as Spirit, the knowledge of which Hegel calls psychology.

32. Termed simply 'Spirit' in the Phenomenology.



involves a harmony of the parts of that community. Hegel discusses in particular the relation of men and women, defined as classes [*Klassen*] in relation to the Human and Divine Law which they each respectively follow, and the relations of modern "*Stände*" or "estates", which he also terms spiritual "*Massen*" or "spheres".

However, while we must not miss the derivation of this, the basic structure of the whole Phenomenology, from Plato's philosophy, we must equally notice the significance of the way Hegel has altered Plato's ideas. At every level, Hegel has allowed for the inclusion of a subjective element which is not present in Plato's thought. This is particularly evident at the level of objective Spirit, where Hegel discusses not only the *Sittlichkeit* of the ancient ethical community, but also the moments of Law and Conscience (in later works) or Culture and Morality (in the Phenomenology) both of which involve a degree of subjective freedom absent in the *polis*, since Law lets me go free and I no longer have to participate to gain its benefits, as was the case in Plato's time, and since Conscience demands that I be my own master, rather than passively accepting the *mores* of the *polis*. However, it is equally true at the level of subjective Spirit, and as we will see shortly Hegel's revision of the platonic doctrine of the soul allows precisely for the inclusion of a principle of subjective freedom at each level. This implies a complete revision of the classical theory of forms, because now in Hegel's view form is not something natural, but something which is self imposed and which must be realised in an individual.<sup>33</sup> And,

33. See Foster, op.cit. p. 73. Foster's characterisation of form as "natural" is perhaps problematic. Plato does not call form natural, but this may be because the contrast to the modern idea of form as artificial or self-imposed has not occurred to him. Instead, he refers to form as "fixed and immutable" (Republic 500c). Aristotle, on the other hand, uses the term 'natural' in more or less the sense implied here, when he describes the state as natural and prior to the individual; though it is perhaps debatable whether it has the same sense when he describes slavery as natural. (Aristotle, Politics, Book I). See also Section I of the Appendix to Habermas' Knowledge and Human Interests, (op.cit. p. 501-2).

as Foster concludes,

"This difference can be expressed properly by saying that the essence of both *polis* and Soul is not in reality form at all, but Spirit, and their virtue or perfection accordingly not *Dikaiosune* [justice] but freedom. Plato, of course, could not either express it or conceive it thus". (M.D.Foster, op. cit. p. 40).

We will examine the significance of this for both subjective and objective Spirit.

### Subjective Spirit

At the beginning of the chapter of the Phenomenology on Spirit, Hegel explains that consciousness, self-consciousness and Reason are to be understood as abstractions from Spirit as a whole, while only Spirit as a whole is real. It is the only place in the Phenomenology where he explains this, and tells us effectively for the first time what he has been doing for the first half of the book, and since it also explains the all important structure of the argument so far in some detail, I will cite it in full.

"Spirit is thus self-supporting, absolute, real being. All previous shapes are abstract forms of it. They result from Spirit analysing itself, distinguishing its moments, and dwelling for a while with each. The isolating of these moments *presupposes* Spirit itself and subsists therein; in other words, the isolation exists only in Spirit which is a concrete existence. In this isolation they have the appearance of really existing as such; but that they are only moments or vanishing quantities is shown by their advance and retreat into their ground and essence; and this essence is just this movement and resolution of these moments. Here, where Spirit or Spirit's reflection into itself is posited, we may briefly recall this aspect of them in our own reflection: they were consciousness, self-consciousness, and Reason. Spirit then is consciousness in general, which embraces sense-certainty, perception, and the Understanding, in so far as in its self-analysis Spirit holds fast to the moment of being an objectively existent actuality to itself and ignores the fact that this actuality is its own being for self. If on the contrary, it holds fast to the other moment of the analysis, viz, that its object is its own *being-for self*, then it is self-consciousness. But as immediate consciousness of the being that is *in and for itself*, as a unity of consciousness and self-consciousness, Spirit is consciousness that *has Reason*; it is consciousness which, as the word 'has' indicates, has the object in a shape which is *implicitly* determined

by Reason or by the value of the category, but in such a way that it does not as yet have for consciousness the value of the category. Spirit is that consciousness which we were considering immediately prior to the present stage [i.e. the attitude of Antigone who rather than attempting rationally to deduce or to test laws, holds firm to the fact that they are right objectively, not because of her judgement]. Finally, when this Reason which Spirit *has* is intuited by Spirit as Reason which *exists*, or as Reason that is actual in Spirit and is its world, then Spirit exists in its truth; it *is* the *ethical* essence that has an *actual* existence. (Phenomenology p. 265).

In this passage, Hegel makes it clear that subjective Spirit is not to be understood as prior to objective Spirit. He has not discussed Spirit in the individual first in order subsequently to be able to understand what happens when we get a plurality of individual Spirits, or a social Spirit. He is not, for example, following the procedure of Sartre's Being and Nothingness, which procedure Sartre also appears to attribute to Hegel, of examining the being-for-self of individuals first, in order later to examine their being-for-others. It is quite misleading, therefore, to say that in the chapter of the Phenomenology on Spirit Hegel discusses Spirit in its 'social' form, as some commentators have done.<sup>34</sup>

It is in contrast to this individualist view that Hegel stresses that the analysis of Spirit into its component parts in the individual is a self-analysis. The whole which is analysed - the self - is prior to its parts, and is not exhausted by them. The whole of Spirit is greater than the sum of its parts. The analysis, therefore, is not of the type which Hegel would

34. For example, Richard Norman in Hegel's Phenomenology, Sussex U.P. 1976 p. 24. Or, G.Armstrong Kelly in A.MacIntyre ed Hegel University of Notre Dame Press London 1972, p. 194: "collective mind does not become a reality until Reason achieves intersubjectivity and passes into Spirit". Intersubjectivity is not objectivity, and Spirit is not merely collective, a mere aggregation of subjects, but is individual in its own right.

attribute to the attitude of Understanding and which we find for example, in Hobbes, which would view the parts of the soul as discrete entities, like the cogs of a machine. Spirit is not like a machine, and its parts are not thus separable. As Hegel says, citing Aristotle, "A hand which is cut off still looks like a hand, and exists, but without being actual."<sup>35</sup> If it were possible to create consciousness, self-consciousness and Reason, and perhaps programme them into a computer, the result would not be Spirit. The isolation of the moments, as Hegel says with emphasis "*presupposes* Spirit itself and subsists therein". It is for this reason that Hegel always refers to the parts of Spirit as "moments", since they are always part of something else, and not individual "component parts" which have no innate need to belong to a greater whole.<sup>36</sup>

Hegel defines the moments of the subjective Spirit as different relationships between subject and object. Consciousness is a relationship of a simple or passive Ego to an object; self-consciousness a relation of the Ego to itself; and Reason or relation of a self-conscious Ego to an object. Each of these moments exists for a self, or is a moment of Consciousness. As Hegel says in the Propaedeutic,

"Consciousness has in general three phases, according to the diversity of the object. It (the object) is namely either the object standing in opposition to the Ego, or it is the Ego itself, or something objective which belongs likewise equally to the Ego, Thought. These moments are not empirically taken up from without, but are moments of consciousness itself. Hence it is

- (1) Consciousness in general;
- (2) Self-Consciousness;
- (3) Reason." (Propaedeutic op. cit. p. 70).

35. Hegel, Philosophy of Right, trans. Knox, OUP 1967, p. 283; Aristotle, Politics, 1253a 19.
36. There has been some debate about the extent to which the parts of the platonic soul also are to be considered separable component parts or as moments of a whole. See Desmond Lee's note in the Penguin Classic edition of the Republic, p. 207.

Finally, when these three moments are understood as a whole, we have not so much a complete individual soul, as "real Spirit, the *ethical* essence that has an *actual* existence", which I will refer to as objective Spirit.<sup>37</sup>

Let us now compare these moments of subjective Spirit to the elements of the platonic soul. We will take the correspondence to be as follows.

Consciousness in Hegel corresponds to the appetitive element of the soul (*To Epithumetikon*) and to the virtue of wisdom (*Sophia*); self-consciousness to the spirited element of the soul (*To Thumoeides*) and to the virtue of courage (*Andreia*); Reason to the rational element (*To Logistikon*) and to the virtue of discipline (*Sophrosune*); and finally Spirit to the soul as a whole and to the virtue of justice (*Dikaiosune*).

We will begin with the level of self-consciousness, since here both the similarities and differences between Hegel and Plato are most obviously apparent. In Plato, the spirited element of the soul is that which impells us to do things which cannot be explained as the result simply of desire, since their consequences may well be physically unpleasant. Courage in the military sense is perhaps the most obvious example, but we should note that there are other senses of *Andreia*. For example, Plato argues that the motivation for any involvement in politics cannot, or at least should not be desire, and must therefore also be *Andreia*.

37. This division of the mind into three parts is also found for example in Freud's work, where it appears as Id, Ego, and Super-Ego. Freud's work, which as Hegel would no doubt have said takes the standpoint of consciousness, sees these elements as more or less discrete entities, and he therefore lacks a conception of justice or spirit, the soul taken as a whole. His super-ego, however, is parallel to reason and discipline in Plato and Hegel, and his Ego to self-consciousness and courage. As we will see shortly, there is an apparent divergence between Plato's view of the first element of the soul as desire and Hegel's as consciousness. This divergence is important and significant; however, it is worth also noting that Freud's concept of the Id accommodates the apparently opposed notions of desire, on the one hand, and the un-selfconscious consciousness of the infant who has not yet achieved self-awareness but still identifies with his parent on the other. See Freud, The Ego and the Id.



Self-consciousness in Hegel's account has an innate need for recognition from other self-conscious beings. This leads it first of all into a life and death struggle which results in the relationship of master to slave, the latter 'recognising' the former in virtue of his courage, which the slave showed himself to lack by his submission. Subsequently, in a sublimated<sup>38</sup> form, this desire for recognition takes a universal form as the desire for honour - which in Plato's view too is the end of spirited action. In the Propadeutic Hegel concludes his discussion of self-consciousness as follows:

"Self-consciousness is, according to this its essential universality, only real in so far as it knows its echo (and reflection) in another (I know that another knows me as itself) and as pure spiritual universality (belonging to the family, the native land etc.) knows itself as the essential self. (This self consciousness is the basis of all virtues, of love, honour, friendship, bravery, all self-sacrifice, all fame, etc). (Propadeutic op. cit. p. 78).

38. I use the idea of sublimation more or less in its Freudian meaning, discussed in Ch.5 below. Sublimation occurs when a desire is directed towards an object not naturally suited to its satisfaction. This occurs in practice (at least, significantly so) only in connection with the sexual instinct. Sublimation thus "consists in the sexual trend abandoning its aim of obtaining a component or a reproductive pleasure and taking another which is related genetically to the abandoned one but is itself no longer sexual but social". (Freud, Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis. Pelican 1973, p. 390. See also ibid p. 47f, and Freud, The Ego and the Id, and Civilization and its Discontents) This is not to be confused with Kaufmann's use of the term sublimation to translate Hegel's *aufheben*, (Kaufmann, op. cit. p. 52) which Bailey in his translation of the Phenomenology renders 'sublate'. In both cases the word carries no other meaning than being a rendering of Hegel's *aufheben*, and does not at all carry the connotation 'make sublime', and therefore serves little purpose. Miller's translation which uses various English words (e.g. 'supersede') is to be preferred.



However, while it is thus clear that self-consciousness, with its desire for recognition is meant to account for those things which Plato associates with the spirited element of the soul, precisely what is absent from Plato's idea is the notion of recognition. As Foster puts it

"To translate Plato's *Thumos* as self-respect is to go too far; all the concepts of reflection - self-knowledge, self-government, self-realisation - are foreign to Greek thought, and the Greek philosophers attain only here and there and in moments of supreme insight to recognition of them. It is the essence of Plato's conception of honour (honour is the end of spirited action) to lie midway between these two extremes and to be differentiated clearly from neither. When Plato's warrior rejects an unworthy impulse, that is certainly not merely the blind following of a natural 'instinct', but neither is it identical with, say, the action of a French gentleman under the *ancien régime*, who is moved by a conception of what his honour demands; and when he lays down his life 'for the sake of the noble' [Aristotle's phrase], his end does not indeed stir in him quite unconsciously, as the demands of the species stir in the stickleback defending its young, but neither is it fully present to his consciousness as an end". (Foster, op. cit. p. 55).

In other words, both Hegel's and Plato's brave men are motivated by some conception of courage, but while Plato's brave man acknowledges courage itself as a virtue which he should realise because it is a virtue, Hegel's brave man acknowledges not only this, but in addition has a purely personal motivation for being courageous, which is to achieve the recognition of other men. It is this subjective element of recognition which differentiates Hegel's view; and it is in order to include it that he abandons the platonic language he used in Natural Law, where courage was a virtue of men who were free in the platonic sense of fearing slavery more than death,<sup>39</sup> and replaces it with the vocabulary of recognition. Here men are *all* free in a more modern sense of being *causa sui* and therefore *need*

39. Plato, Republic, 387b. Natural Law op. cit. p. 93.

the recognition of others, are of *necessity* more or less courageous. Here as elsewhere we observe that while according to the classical doctrine of form, it is not essential to a form that it take on an individual existence, in the Hegelian version form must be realised. Man's perfection, as Foster puts it "is no longer to be the substance of a form, but the subject of an activity".<sup>40</sup>

It is possible to apply more or less the same argument in connection with Reason, the third moment of Subjective Spirit and of the platonic soul. That the two are parallel is evident enough, though Hegel, since he is keen to avoid opposing Reason to passion<sup>41</sup> would probably dispute that the virtue of reason is exactly self-discipline;<sup>42</sup> but this involves an argument which we will come to shortly in connection with consciousness. The central difference we may express briefly as follows. *To Logistikon* in Plato is essentially a faculty of deliberation perfected in the art of

40. Foster, op. cit. p. 59.

41. There are many places where Hegel discusses his view of the relation of Reason to passion, - and as Foster comments "I suppose there is no reader of Hegel who has not felt in his heart that the argument for the identity of these opposites is a *tour de force*" (op.cit. p. 88). See Hegel's Philosophy of Mind, Oxford, 1971, p. 235 ff. or Philosophy of History, op. cit., p. 9 and p.23 ff.). We should also take care to note that Hegel uses the term Reason in two senses, both of which can be seen in the paragraph quoted above (p.56f) from the Phenomenology. These are Reason in the abstract sense of being a faculty which Spirit possesses, corresponding to Reason in Kant, and Reason which exists, which is identical to objective Spirit. It is in the latter sense only that Hegel uses the word in speaking of the rational state, of Reason causing History, and similar formulations.

42. In any case it is not absolutely clear that Plato has made a direct parallel between the cardinal virtues and the elements of the soul - perhaps due to the mismatch between desire and wisdom, which is discussed below.

dialectic, whose purpose is to know the forms.<sup>43</sup> In Hegel, reason certainly has some such function. Its essence, however, is different. It is the attitude of a self-conscious or free man towards phenomenal objectivity, in distinction to the passive attitude of a merely conscious observer. In this sense Reason stands in the same relation to consciousness in Hegel as it does to Understanding in Kant. However, the freedom of self-consciousness in Hegel is not equivalent to the freedom of pure reason in Kant, which consists in being unconstrained by the phenomenal world, in distinction from Understanding which is constrained to understand what exists. It is a freedom in relation to the world, and which is essentially involved in it. If consciousness is disinterested in the world, then Reason is the opposite, an *interested* attitude. Again, therefore, we see that in Hegel's view the subjective element has become essential so that as a free being or as Spirit, I am constrained of necessity to be interested in the world, or reasonable.<sup>44</sup> Reason is not a device, a faculty which I may or may not use, as it is explicitly in both Plato and Kant,<sup>45</sup> but essential to all human individuality.

If the second and third moments of Subjective Spirit can thus be seen as the second and third elements of the platonic soul modified to include a subjective principle, the same cannot exactly be said of consciousness,

43. Plato, Republic, 532 ff.

44. Thus, when the mafioso in Mario Puzzo's Godfather says 'be reasonable' he does not mean "be logical" or "apply universal rational standards", but "pay attention to your interests". His conception of reason coincides with Hegel's but not Plato's or Kant's.

45. I. Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, trans. Norman Kemp Smith, MacMillan, 1933, p. 300 f.

the first moment of subjective Spirit. There may perhaps be some connection between consciousness and desire,<sup>46</sup> but certainly consciousness cannot be characterised simply as a modification of platonic desire. Hegel, presumably consciously, seems radically to have altered Plato's view of the first element of the soul, and we must ask why he has done this.

Let us note firstly the extent to which Plato and Hegel are on common ground in talking about the first element of the soul. This may be expressed by saying that the first element of the soul is unfree, but in different senses for Plato and for Hegel. For Plato, desire is unfree because it constrains us to satisfy it. In so far as we desire we are moved by a purely natural compulsion, while the spirited and rational elements of the soul are not governed by anything natural, but are freely taken up by the individual of his own accord. Since for Plato freedom - in the limited sense in which he uses the word<sup>47</sup> - is to be valued over unfreedom, it follows that desire must always be subordinated to courage and reason.

Consciousness in Hegel is likewise unfree. Unlike Reason, which can follow its own trains of thought where and when it pleases, consciousness is constrained to be knowledge of the object which is present to it.<sup>48</sup>

46. See note 37 to this chapter.

47. Freedom is a term Plato uses rarely. When he does it has two significances. Firstly, freedom means fearing slavery more than death, and is thus related to courage. Secondly, the citizen is free, in so far as he is his own master, or is rational. There is no freedom in desire. See Republic, 387b, 430c.

48. Here, of course, Hegel follows Kant's distinction between Reason and Understanding. Hegel sometimes, but not always, uses the terms Understanding and Consciousness interchangeably (see Ch. 4 below).

It is in this sense that wisdom, which is true knowledge, is a virtue of consciousness rather than reason, even though reason is essentially involved in it. However, while Kant was happy with the idea that understanding was unfree, and Plato with the unfreedom of desire, Hegel includes a subjective element even at this level of the soul. Consciousness for Hegel is not conceivable except as a property of a free being, ie. Spirit. All consciousness is equally self-consciousness, since I cannot be conscious of something without being conscious of that consciousness, or self-conscious.<sup>49</sup>

However, if this accounts for the subjective element in consciousness and distinguishes Hegel's view from Kant's, it does not go any way towards reconciling consciousness and desire. Hegel, in fact, does not attempt to do this at all, and instead he makes desire into an element of self-consciousness, thus considerably revising Plato's view. If we consider Plato's view of the first element of the soul further, we will find that there are good reasons for doing this.

If we presume that the cardinal virtues in Plato are connected respectively to the elements of the soul, and to the classes in the state, we then find that by a process of elimination, the virtue of *Sophia* belongs to desire and to the productive class. It may be the case that Plato does not wish to make this connection, but if this is true we must point out (a) that Hegel, who wishes in the Phenomenology to demonstrate Spirit as a necessity will want to make such a connection,<sup>50</sup> while Plato may be happy simply to record what he observes to be the case, and (b) that we should have to reject some of Foster's interpretations of Plato, for example, that Plato's classes are defined by possession of their own specific virtue.<sup>51</sup>

49. Phenomenology, p. 99, see Ch. 4 below.

50. Which he does in Natural Law, op. cit. p. 93ff.

51. Foster, op. cit. p. 65.



It makes sense therefore for us to question the connection whether Plato directly intends it or not.

*Sophia*, however, is hard to pin down in Plato. In the Symposium, Plato presents a hierarchy of desire from physical desire through the love of beauty to the love of knowledge, which latter of course is the highest point. However, the desire which leads ultimately to wisdom in this picture is not *Epithumea* but *Eros*, and *Eros* is not a discrete element of the soul. In the Republic even this connection seems to be lacking. If *Sophia* is connected to any element of the soul it seems to be to the rational *Logistikon*,<sup>52</sup> and *To Logistikon* therefore has two cardinal virtues, *Sophia* and *Sophrosune* or temperance. *Epithumea* is then without virtue.

This difficulty is compounded if we attempt to connect the virtues to the classes. Here Plato is, to begin with, quite specific. The Guardians have *Sophia*, the auxiliaries *Andreia*, and everyone is capable of *Dikaiosune* in so far as he 'minds his own business'. It is the virtue of *Sophrosune*, now, not *Sophia*, whose position is uncertain. *Sophrosune* is found in the state, according to Plato, in so far as the lower classes in the state are subordinated to and controlled by the higher classes. This means that the productive class has no virtue of its own, just as desire in the soul is without virtue.<sup>53</sup>

52. This is Foster's position : op. cit. p. 56.

53. This is presumably connected to Greek attitudes to productive work and to the existence of slavery - but we will not follow this connection here, except to suggest that Hegel has an historical advantage over Plato, in so far as slavery no longer exists and work is acknowledged to have a value of its own.

By making desire into an element of self-consciousness, Hegel is able to make more sense of this picture. *Sophia*, to begin with, relates clearly to consciousness, and there is no longer any difficulty in locating it. Desire, on the other hand, ceases to be a discrete moment of the soul, and instead is only a moment of self-consciousness. This means both that there is no longer any need to find a specific virtue for desire, and that it is nevertheless capable of partaking of the virtue of self-consciousness, of *Thumos* or spiritedness, and there can therefore be some virtue in its satisfaction. Since it is no longer a discrete moment of the soul it is not directly opposed to reason. It is consciousness rather than desire that is the opposite of reason, and, as Hegel often argues, passion and reason do not have to be seen as in direct opposition to each other.<sup>54</sup>

There are further advantages of this relocation of desire which will be mentioned in the appropriate place. For the moment we will be content to conclude that Hegel's accommodation of the principle of desire makes his view of the soul fundamentally different from the platonic view which is unable to reconcile desire with reason and spirit except by suppressing it. As Foster comments in connection with the Philosophy of Right,

"Hegel will be found to repeat again and again as his fundamental criticism of the platonic political philosophy that Plato's *Polis* was based upon the suppression of this element of the soul [Desire] which therefore when it could be suppressed no longer burst out in manifestations hostile to lawful order and eventually destructive to it; and in contrast to this defect the might of the modern state, which can afford to tolerate this freedom within itself, and even draws vitality to itself from its exercise". (Foster, op. cit. p. 62)

54. e.g. Philosophy of History, p. 23.

We should add to this only that it is because Hegel does not make desire a discrete element of the soul that this is possible. Even in Natural Law, Hegel has gone some way towards this position, since his bourgeois class, which corresponds to the productive class in Plato is no longer defined simply by desire. Instead it is related to a generalised system of needs and these needs belong not to one class but to all classes. Further, Hegel can be seen to connect the bourgeois class both with consciousness<sup>55</sup> and with wisdom.<sup>56</sup> However, in discussing classes we are going beyond Subjective Spirit into the realm of Objective Spirit, and we should first say what is meant by this latter term.

#### Objective Spirit

In the Philosophy of Mind of the 1817 Encyclopaedia Hegel divides Spirit into Subjective, Objective, and Absolute Spirit. However, while it is clear that Subjective and Absolute Spirit correspond to the sections of the Phenomenology on Consciousness, Self-consciousness, and Reason (Sections A, B and C) and to the sections on Religion and Absolute Knowledge (CC, and DD) respectively, it is not immediately apparent that there is such a correspondance between Objective Spirit and Section BB of the Phenomenology titled simply Spirit.<sup>57</sup> The difference between the two versions is partly

55. Natural Law, p. 94

56. Ibid, p. 104. The virtue of the bourgeois class is found in a "reconciliation which lies in the knowledge of necessity".

57. There has been some discussion of the significance of the way the Phenomenology is variously divided up into chapters and headings, and of why, for example, Spirit should be headed 'BB'. Since the designations 'BB' and 'CC' were added not by Hegel but by later editors, and apparently intended to emphasise the correlation with the Encyclopaedia we are discussing, we should not take it directly as evidence of that correlation. See J. Hyppolite, Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit, Northwestern U.P. 1974, p. 54 ff.

to be accounted for in terms of the differing aims and methods of both works, which will be discussed in Chapter three. Here we will consider only the question of what, substantially, Hegel means by "Objective Spirit" in his later works and "Spirit" in the Phenomenology.

Subjective Spirit in the Encyclopaedia is divided into three moments. It is (a) immediately the soul, which Hegel following Aristotle calls the sleep of Spirit,<sup>58</sup> (b) the appearance of the soul in the individual as consciousness, self-consciousness, and Reason, the science of which Hegel calls phenomenology, and (c) this appearance as an actualised totality, still in the individual, called Spirit,<sup>59</sup> the science of which is psychology. The second of these moments is in substantial terms more or less exactly parallel to Sections A, B and C of the Phenomenology. Absolute Spirit in the Encyclopaedia covers Art, Religion, and Philosophy, and though Art and Religion are discussed together under the headings of Religion in the Phenomenology, not separately as in the Encyclopaedia,<sup>60</sup> there is little difficulty in concluding that Religion and Absolute knowledge in the Phenomenology are moments of what Hegel later terms Absolute Spirit.<sup>61</sup>

Absolute Spirit is the ground of both Subjective and Objective Spirit, and corresponds to 'the good itself' in Plato. It is known in the form of beauty, in art; God, in religion; and as a self-conscious unity of both

58. Hegel, Philosophy of Mind, p. 29. "Soul is only the sleep of Spirit, the passive *noûs* of Aristotle, which is potentially all things".
59. Translated by Wallace as 'Mind' - a translation I have always altered to Spirit, except in quoting the title "Philosophy of Mind". See Kaufmann, pp. 160-2 for the relative merit of both translations.
60. Perhaps in the Phenomenology Hegel ranks philosophy higher than Absolute Spirit, since it appears as a transition to Logic, which as we have seen (p. 29 above) is not part of Spirit but an expression of the Absolute Idea, of which nature and Spirit are mere moments.
61. Though even in the Encyclopaedia Absolute Spirit is in general Religion (Philosophy of Mind, p. 292).

in Philosophy. It is itself only one moment of the Absolute Idea, which also contains Nature and exhibits itself freely in Logic. Nevertheless, it is free in a sense in which both Subjective and Objective Spirit are not. Subjective Spirit is limited to the individual, and cannot achieve any real existence except in relation to an objective world. This world, even when it is understood as Spirit, is still a fact, and even the most unwilling are forced to recognise it. It is impossible, in other words, to go through life without acknowledging the family, law, and so on, since each not only exists but has the power to make sure that this fact is acknowledged and respected. Absolute Spirit, however, is to be respected in its own right; and it is quite possible to go through life without ever noticing beauty or God. It is only in these forms, therefore, that Spirit is presented to itself in a form which is truly adequate to its essential nature, that is, Freedom, for only in these forms is one free to acknowledge or <sup>to</sup> deny it.

Absolute Spirit, however, cannot exist even in the forms adequate to its nature without also existing in reality in the forms of Subjective and Objective Spirit. It needs both free individuals and an objective order; and these, if they are not to be seen as simply in opposition to each other as freedom and necessity, must be each intuited as moments of the Absolute. Hegel therefore defines Objective Spirit not so much as an existing social order in which the subjective can express itself, but as "the Absolute Idea, but only existing *in posse*"<sup>62</sup> It is subsequently structured in conformity with the three moments of subjective spirit, in both the Encyclopaedia and

62. That is, as something enforced. (fn. 1 p. 262) Philosophy of Mind, op. cit. p. 241.



in the Philosophy of Right which does little more than expand the section of the Encyclopaedia on Objective Spirit. Thus it becomes Law, Morality and *Sittlichkeit*; Law relating to consciousness as the element in which the individual as a single being or person knows right as something formal and abstract (the *Gezetz* of Understanding); Morality relating to the purely subjective will of self-consciousness, the principle of conscience; and *Sittlichkeit* to their actual and rational unity in a 'totality of necessity' in the family, civil society and the State.<sup>63</sup>

In the chapter of the Phenomenology on Spirit we find at first sight a different content. It begins with a discussion of Greek ethical life which is almost entirely taken up with a discussion of Sophocles' *Antigone* and *Oedipus Rex*, and to some extent Aeschylus' *Eumenides*.<sup>65</sup> This is followed by a discussion of Culture (*Bildung*)<sup>66</sup> which consists essentially in an account of the origins of the French Revolution, and which has an historical

63. Hegel, Philosophy of Mind, p. 243, §487. Family, Civil Society and State also divide according to the divisions of Subjective Spirit, and in Hegel's view there are many ways in which the structure of Objective Spirit mirrors the structure of the individual soul; while in Plato this seems to be the case only of class divisions.

64. Which Hegel had translated into German prose at school, into verse at Tübingen, and which he, like Aristotle, appears always to regard as a paradigm of Greek tragedy.

65. A.C. Bradley, "Hegel's Theory of Tragedy" in Paolucci and Paolucci (eds.), Hegel on Tragedy, Harper Torchbooks 1962, p. 371.

66. *Bildung* is translated by Kojève as '*proces formatif-et-educatif*' - formative and educative process. Foster's use of the Platonic notion of 'informing' as both 'giving form to' and 'educating', though not explicitly linked by him to *Bildung*, shows the link of *Bildung* to the classical theory of form.

slant absent from the Encyclopaedia<sup>67</sup>. Finally, there is a discussion of Morality, in which Hegel returns to more familiar ground, and treats Morality much as he did in his earlier writings and would do in later works. We are left therefore, with the question of whether and in what sense Hegel's discussion of Greek tragedy and of the French Revolution fit into the notion of Objective Spirit.

As we have presented Objective Spirit so far, it has appeared directly parallel to Plato's justice in the state. It is the good, realised in an objective form, and corresponding to the nature of the soul, which as we know Hegel had re-defined as consciousness, self-consciousness and reason, in order to include within it a subjective element. However, in both the Encyclopaedia and the Philosophy of Right he insists upon the inclusion of a subjective element equally with the state<sup>68</sup> (understood in the broad sense of the word) itself. This subjective element, he argues, is absent not only from Plato's philosophy, but also from the *polis* as a whole, which has achieved *substantive* freedom, but not yet *subjective* freedom. Hegel defines these two terms in the Philosophy of History as follows:

67. Both the Philosophy of Right and Encyclopaedia end with a very brief discussion of History. This presents the view of the Philosophy of History rather than the Phenomenology, and is an appendage - if an essential one - to the text. The main discussion of Objective Spirit itself is not historical.
68. Using the term "the state" in connection with Hegel I mean to include everything included in the German term *Recht* in Hegel's interpretation. The state in this sense is objective spirit, and corresponds more to the ancient community or *polis* than the modern state. Hegel's term "*Staat*" on the other hand sometimes means the state in the more restrictive and modern sense, the third dimension of *Sittlichkeit* which is counterposed to both Family and Civil Society. I qualify this as the state 'in the narrow sense', since the alternative of rendering *Recht* as "Right" or "Law" is linguistically clumsy and potentially misleading.

"Substantial freedom is the abstract undeveloped Reason implicit in volition, proceeding to develop itself in the State. But in this phase of Reason there is still wanting personal insight and will, that is subjective freedom; which is realised only in the individual, and constitutes the reflection of the individual in his own conscience". (Philosophy of History, op.cit. p. 104).

In the Philosophy of Right, Hegel constantly criticises Plato for having no room for what he calls variously the right of "subjective freedom", the "subjective element", the "freedom of the individual", "the right to satisfaction of the particularity of the subject",<sup>69</sup> and so on. To cite one example, he says

"In Plato's state, subjective freedom does not count, because people have their occupation assigned to them by the Guardians. In many oriental states this assignment is determined by birth. But subjective freedom, which must be respected, demands that individuals should have free choice in this matter". (Philosophy of Right, p. 280). 70

Subjective freedom, we may therefore presume, is to be respected in Hegel's state. We will return shortly to the question of how this is to be done.

Hegel's criticism of Plato here, then, is not unlike that of the many modern writers who accuse Plato of totalitarianism,<sup>71</sup> in so far as totalitarianism is an incursion upon the freedom of the individual. However, in Hegel's view it is just as much an anachronism to apply this criticism directly to Plato as it would be to apply Plato's ideas directly to the modern world. This is because the principle of subjective freedom was only just beginning in Plato's time to appear on the scene. It found no expression

69. Foster, op. cit. p. 72.

70. See also Philosophy of Right, op. cit, pp. 42, 124, 133, 195.

71 E.g. RHS Crossman in Plato Today, Allen & Unwin, 1963.

in the objective element of the *polis*, and appeared only in various forms as a difficulty to be coped with, so that it makes more sense to praise Plato for the extent to which he recognised the problem and attempted to suppress it, than to criticise him for this suppression.

"In his Republic, Plato displays the substance of ethical life in its ideal beauty and truth; but he could not cope with the principle of self-subsistent particularity, which in his day had forced its way into Greek ethical life, by setting up in opposition to it his purely substantial state. He absolutely excluded it from his state, even in its very beginnings in private property and the family, as well as in its more mature form as the subjective will, the choice of a social position, and so forth. It is this defect which is responsible for the usual view of it as a dream of abstract thinking, as what is often called a 'mere ideal',<sup>72</sup> The principle of self-subsistent inherently infinite personality of the individual, the principle of subjective freedom, is denied its right in the purely substantial form which Plato gave to Spirit in its actuality. This principle dawned in an inward form in the Christian religion and in an external form (and therefore one linked with abstract universality) in the Roman world. It is historically subsequent to the Greek world, and the philosophic reflection which descends to its depth is likewise subsequent to the substantial Idea of Greek philosophy". (Philosophy of Right, p. 124).

In the Phenomenology, this question of the historical emergence of subjective freedom assumes central importance, especially in the first two sections on *Sittlichkeit* and Culture. It may be the case that Hegel emphasises this out of proportion. Certainly it is true that the chapter was originally intended to be much shorter,<sup>73</sup> and it also seems quite plausible that Hegel would have felt it worthwhile to spend a good deal of time criticising anachronistic readings of Plato in view of the influence of Romantic ideas in the unstable political situation in 1806,

72. Cf Philosophy of Right, Preface, p. 10 "Plato's Republic, which passes proverbially as an empty idea, is in essence nothing but an interpretation of Greek ethical life".

73. Kaufmann op. cit. p. 51. Hyppolite p. 54 ff.

while this might have seemed less important a decade later.

The account of Spirit in the Phenomenology, however, shares one important factor in common with the account of the Encyclopaedia. In both works the inclusion of the principle of subjective freedom is not just an addition or footnote to Plato's political theory, but entails a whole new approach to the philosophy of the state - just as we saw earlier the inclusion of a subjective element in the soul entailed a redefinition of the parts themselves. Foster summarises this by saying that while for both Plato and Hegel there is a 'dialectic' which will determine the nature of a just state, this dialectic is for Plato only a process of thought, while for Hegel it is "immanent in the being or idea which is his object".<sup>74</sup> This is because for Plato the just state is an ideal which thinking men may strive for, while for Hegel it is an ideal which must be realised in the individual,<sup>75</sup> or because the form of the good state is not natural, but self-imposed.<sup>76</sup> While Plato therefore has only to demonstrate the goodness of the just state, it falls to Hegel to demonstrate the necessity of its existence. Thus in the Phenomenology in the paragraph immediately following the one which was quoted in full on page 56f. above Hegel says

"Spirit is the ethical life of a nation insofar as it is the immediate truth - the individual that is a world. It must advance to the consciousness of what it is immediately, must leave behind it the beauty of ethical life, and by passing through a series of shapes attain to knowledge of itself. These shapes, however, are distinguished from the previous ones by the fact that they are real Spirits, actualities in the strict sense of the word, and instead of being shapes merely of consciousness are shapes of a world". (Phenomenology, p. 265).

74. Foster, op. cit. p. 122.

75. Ibid, p. 58.

76. Ibid, p. 41



This real dialectic of Spirit has two connotations, which are respectively the bases of Spirit in the Phenomenology and Objective Spirit in the Encyclopaedia and which will be examined further in Chapter 3 below. It firstly has the connotation that a form exists in the full sense (in and for itself) only in being known, so that the process of the development of knowledge is equally a historical process of the realisation of implicit being. This is the sense Hegel wants to demonstrate in the Phenomenology and it can also be seen clearly in the Philosophy of History, where history is characterised not as is sometimes said as a development of freedom, from the ancient despotisms where one man is free, through Greek society where many are free to the present day where all generally are free, but as a development of the *knowledge* of freedom.<sup>77</sup> The dialectic of knowledge is a historical dialectic, and in the Phenomenology the dialectic of the knowledge of subjective freedom is therefore of necessity a historical dialectic; and this is because it is not so much a form which may be realised, as an idea which must be self-imposed. On the other hand, the notion that the dialectic of Spirit is real has the connotation that the individual must be capable subjectively of grasping reality as thought, and of being able freely to grasp its rational necessity as a manifestation of the absolute idea. This is the approach of the Encyclopaedia and Philosophy of Right, and is summarised in the epigram "What is rational is actual and what is actual is rational".<sup>78</sup> Although this approach presupposes that the idea is already actual, not merely implicit but explicit or known, and therefore that it has developed historically or 'become', this approach need not

77. Philosophy of History, op. cit, p. 18.

78. Philosophy of Right, op. cit. p. 10 and Lesser Logic, op. cit. p. 9.

itself be historical, and can proceed directly to account rationally for what exists in and for itself.

If the methodical implications of the inclusion of a subjective element in the philosophy of the state are thus clear enough, it must also be said that Hegel is less clear about what the inclusion of the subjective element means in more concrete terms. In the Philosophy of Right (we will consider what he has to say in the Phenomenology in Chapter 7 below) while he is strong on the importance of the inclusion of subjective freedom, he remains vague on the question of just where it is to be found. Attempting to clarify this, Foster argues that there are two dimensions of subjective freedom, which he calls ethical and economic<sup>79</sup>. Economic subjective freedom relates to desire, and is satisfied by (a) the limitation of the state, so that one is free from it in a sphere of private life, while in Plato's thought it is all embracing<sup>80</sup> and (b) the choice of one's position in the class structure. Ethical subjective freedom relates to Reason,<sup>81</sup> and is satisfied (a) by the fact that law is general and positive and (b) by the inclusion of the principle of conscience. Foster goes on to point out that while Hegel has included a subjective element in connection with two elements of the platonic soul, he has omitted to include it in connection with the third element, the spirited element. The correct place for this would in Foster's view be in connection with what he terms a 'sovereign will'. That is, a rational state

79. Foster, p. 110 ff.

80. Hence the 'totalitarian' charge.

81. Foster contrasts the ancient and modern conceptions of reason through their conception of Law. For the ancients form is the principle of reason and order, and law in *Nomos* or custom; while for Hegel and the modern view in general which includes subjective freedom, Law (*Gesetz*) is the principle of Reason and order, and is distinguished by the fact that it is universal (ie general, non-specific) and that it is posited or commanded - as for example in Hobbes' philosophy. Foster, op. cit, Ch. IV.

which included subjective freedom, as it must, would have to include a mechanism by which the will of the people can be expressed through some representative body as the will of the state. Hegel's state lacks such a democratic institution, and its representative assemblies can only advise the government and educate the people, since the state must remain sovereign, and the people subject.

This in its turn is due to the fact that Hegel has failed ultimately to escape the classical theory of forms, and he therefore still sees the ideal state as a representation of a form and not something which a free people can actively create through their own free will.<sup>82</sup> Finally, Foster connects this inadequacy with what he perceives as a related inadequacy in Hegel's theology. In his enthusiasm for the New Testament and his distaste for the positive doctrines of the Old Testament, Hegel has failed to grasp the importance of the Old Testament idea of an all powerful creative God. In perceiving God as essentially perfect and indifferent to the world rather than as essentially creative and therefore sovereign ruler of the world, his theology remains pagan and has missed an important insight provided only by christian theology.<sup>83</sup>

There are a number of weaknesses in Foster's argument. To begin with, his account of sovereignty in Hegel seems incomplete. It is true that for Hegel sovereignty should lie with the monarch, and that the legislature functions essentially only as an advisory body.<sup>84</sup> However, if Hegel were to go beyond this view and make the representative assemblies as representatives

82. Foster, p. 134.

83. Ibid, p. 138 ff.

84. Philosophy of Right p. 195, §300 and §301.

of the people sovereign, he would run the risk of losing the sovereignty of the state altogether. It is only by maintaining for itself the moment of ultimate decision that the state retains the characteristic of being a concrete individual. In Plato's view, by contrast, this aspect is absent: the rulers are not free, but constrained to realise the form of justice, and the state, correspondingly, is not an individual entity, but merely an aspect of the community. The Hegelian state retains the aspect of its independent individuality through the crown. "The power of the crown", Hegel writes

"contains within itself the three moments of the whole (see paragraph 272), viz. ( $\alpha$ ) the universality of the constitution and the laws; ( $\beta$ ) counsel, which refers the particular to the universal, and ( $\gamma$ ) the moment of ultimate decision, as the self-determination to which everything else reverts and from which everything else derives the beginning of its actuality". (Philosophy of Right, p.179, §275).

It does not follow from this, in Hegel's view, that the individual free will of the citizen is excluded from the state. The purely abstract general will of the people - what is called public opinion - is indeed, rightly, subordinated to the sovereign will which is expressed in the crown. Nevertheless, the people are more than the generalisation of their ideas and prejudices in public opinion. They, like states, are concrete individuals; and their individuality is expressed in the fact that they have not only ideas, but also concrete interests, and further, a certain power or energy at their disposal to realize these interests. It is this element of subjectivity which in Hegel's account is capable of being incorporated within the state without threatening its ultimate sovereignty. It is expressed through the Estates, each of which has a concrete interest in the function of the state. Hegel says

"the specific function which the concept assigns to the Estates is to be sought in the fact that in them the subjective moment in universal freedom - the private judgement and private will of the sphere called "civil society" in this book - comes into existence integrally related to the state". (Philosophy of Right p. 197. §301)

It is clear, then, that in Hegel's view the dimension of subjective freedom of the citizen's will is indeed included in his conception of the state, through the functioning of the Estates. It may perhaps be contended that the idea of the Estates is outmoded. Charles Taylor, for example, feels able to comment on Hegel's view of the Estates simply that it is "clearly untenable today".<sup>84b</sup> However, if this is so, it may well be only because of the fashion for rational thinking, which regards anything which has to do with private interest and power as essentially irrational, and therefore to be excluded at least from political theory, if not from politics altogether. Foster's view, which seems to see the only alternatives to be either that the general will - which in his view is explicitly the rational will - is sovereign, or that it is not and some particular and therefore irrational will is sovereign, is perhaps also guilty of this one-sidedness. In any case, it is clear that he ought to reckon with Hegel's account of the way the subjective freedom of the citizens will is "integrally related to" the sovereign state through the Estates of the realm; and this he fails to do.

Secondly, although Foster is certainly right to say that Hegel's notion of subjective freedom in the Philosophy of Right is not clearly defined, his attempt to clarify it by specifying economic and moral dimensions of subjective freedom

84b Charles Taylor, Hegel, C.U.P. 1975, p.186.



is open to objection. Though there are different aspects of subjective freedom for each moment of subjective spirit, it does not follow that there should be specific institutions to satisfy each aspect. If the elements of the platonic state correspond to elements of the soul, the same one to one correspondance is not found in Hegel. Hegel's state embodies the elements of the soul taken as a whole, as Spirit, and though the elements of the soul may be found at various levels within the state, the state is not simply a mirror image objectification of the soul. Further, in so far as it is possible to locate elements of the soul in the state, we should have to point out that desire<sup>alone</sup> is not in Hegel's view a <sup>discrete</sup> element of the soul. 'Economic' subjective freedom is therefore problematic, and we should rather look for subjective freedom in connection with consciousness (or knowledge), self-consciousness, and reason.

Thirdly, Foster's characterisation of Hegel's theology, while acceptable as an appraisal of the Early Theological Writings, is not compatible with Hegel's later theological views, especially those expressed in the Lesser Logic. Hegel is clearly aware of the significance of the contrast between the jealous Judaic God and the merely good Greek God,<sup>85</sup> and explicitly contrasts to both the christian notion of a creative God.<sup>86</sup> He does not, it is true, take the notion of a Creator to the extreme which is found in some protestant theology, where it is argued that since God is all powerful and creative, man is a powerless creature. In contrast to this alien view of God, Hegel prefers the more pagan notion of God as an ideal or as an essence. However, he modifies the pagan view precisely in order to include the subjective element,

85. Philosophy of Mind p. 298, Lesser Logic p. 198  
cf. also Plato's Republic, 380c.

86. Lesser Logic, p. 185, p. 227

and sees God not as indifferent to the world, but, as Singer puts it, as "an essence that needs to manifest itself in the world".<sup>87</sup>

Nevertheless, in spite of these difficulties in reconciling Foster's criticism with what Hegel actually says, we will find when we return to Objective Spirit in Chapter 7 below that it is by no means without value, and points to an important weak point in Hegel's system.

### Absolute Spirit

In what follows I do not intend to discuss absolute Spirit in and for itself - the object which is freely presented to consciousness in art, religion and philosophy. Instead, I have limited myself to a discussion of the subjective and objective modes of its appearance. However, as I hope is clear from what has been said, it is of the greatest importance to understand these latter as moments of Absolute Spirit, and to understand Absolute Spirit itself as a moment of the Absolute Idea. As Hegel says, "it is the Absolute which makes philosophy a genuine science"<sup>88</sup> - which is really just another way of saying philosophy seeks truth - and it is impossible to understand the Phenomenology without interpreting every stage as a moment of the Absolute. In order to emphasise the importance of this, and in place of a discussion of 'Absolute being as such',<sup>89</sup> I want to conclude by mentioning two interpretations of the Phenomenology which offer subtly different views of its structure, of the Absolute, and thus of Hegel's entire philosophy.

87. P. Singer, Hegel, OUP 1983, p. 83.

88. Natural Law, op. cit. p. 55.

89. Phenomenology, p. 410.

The first of these interpretations is often found in association with marxism, and can be seen for example in G.Lukács' book "The Young Hegel". Its most general characteristic is that it substitutes for Hegel's Absolute the notion of 'totality'. This is not exactly contrary to Hegel's view, since absolute spirit is indeed a totality of consciousness, self-consciousness, Reason, and Spirit.<sup>90</sup> However, in Hegel's view this totality is an independent entity, not just an 'overview' of the parts: while Lukács explicitly contradicts this, saying that "no new content emerges at this point".<sup>91</sup> This conception slips gently into an interpretation in which (a) only Spirit as a whole or totality is real, and yet (b) Spirit has no existence except through its parts. This makes the notion of Spirit as a totality extremely hard to pin down, since it is both everything and no particular thing, and in fact the notion of 'totality' in general is for this reason ultimately mysterious.

Following the first side of this ambiguity, that is, viewing only the totality of Spirit as real and its parts as illusory, Lukács draws a parallel between Hegel and Marx. He begins by quoting the following passage from the final chapter of the Phenomenology:

90. Ibid, p. 412-3.

91. Lukács, op.cit, p. 508. This refers to the chapter on Religion, and commits Lukács to the view that religion is not an independent idea, but only the totality of consciousness, self-consciousness, reason, and Spirit. His argument might be stronger if it were made in connection only with the chapter on Absolute Knowledge, but seems *prima facie* to be an absurd view of Religion, arguing effectively that Religion does not exist. Lukács' position is also shared by Kojève. "According to Hegel - to use the Marxist terminology - Religion is only an ideological superstructure that is born and exists solely in relation to a *real* substructure" (op.cit. p. 32).

"It is only Spirit in its entirety that is in time, and the shapes assumed, which are specific embodiments of the whole of Spirit as such, present themselves in sequence one after another. For it is only the whole which properly has reality, and hence the form of pure freedom relatively to anything else, the form which takes expression as time. But the moments of the whole, consciousness, self-consciousness, reason, and spirit, have, because they are moments, no existence separate from each other" (Hegel, Phenomenology, quoted in Lukács op. cit. p. 466).

He then goes on to compare this favourably with a passage from Marx's The German Ideology.

"Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development; but men, developing their material intercourse, alter along with this their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking". (Marx, The German Ideology, quoted in Lukács op.cit. p. 467).

The implication of this comparison is that every real phenomenon is actually an illusion, and to overcome the illusion real phenomena must be reduced to Spirit, just as for Marx in order to overcome 'ideology' everything must be reduced to matter - (in so far as notions such as 'intercourse' are conceived of by Marx as 'material'). Once Hegel is interpreted in this way, there is indeed little difference between him and Marx, and it is easy to interpret Marx as having put Hegel back on his feet. Lukács concludes his comparison of the two passages saying

"They make it particularly clear just how necessary it was to translate Hegel's dialectic into a materialistic one". (Ibid).

To account for the divergence in content between Hegel and Marx, Lukács goes on to explain that

"Marx's action in putting Spirit 'back on its feet', in asserting the priority of means of production over ideology did not simply mean putting the pluses for the minuses; it meant a thorough revision of all the substantive and ideological moment of history". (Ibid). 92

92. This interpretation of the relation of Hegel to Marx is not universally accepted by Marxists. See Louis Althusser, Contradiction and Overdetermination in For Marx trans. Ben Brewster. New Left Books, 1977 pp.89ff. The question of the relation of Hegel's ideas to Marx's is much complicated by the fact that Marx claims both to have been greatly influenced by, and greatly to have improved upon Hegel's ideas, whereas in fact his understanding of Hegel is at best impressionistic, and often quite wrong.

In contrast to this kind of interpretation, we must assert that the moments of Spirit are not in Hegel's view false in themselves, as ideology is for Marx, not something to be overcome, but are necessary to the existence of Spirit, and only false if they are taken to have an independent existence of their own. It is perhaps easy to lose sight of this fact since Hegel's discussions of the parts of Spirit in the Phenomenology are very critical. It is tempting to conclude, for example, from Hegel's discussion of Understanding that Understanding is a type of thinking which should be abolished entirely. This, however, is not Hegel's view. His argument is only that Understanding must be understood as a moment of Spirit, and it is only thinking which limits itself to understanding or which holds that understanding itself is adequate to true knowledge of Spirit which is false. As a moment of Spirit, Understanding can and must exist, and in the Preface to the Phenomenology he describes it as "the greatest and most astonishing power that exists, or rather absolute power",<sup>93</sup> and he stresses that we must recognise its "true value and position".<sup>94</sup> When Hegel stresses that the moments of Spirit have "no existence separate from each other" we should not conclude that this means that they have no right to exist at all, but only that they must be taken not as independent entities, cogs in a machine, but as essential parts in a harmonious unity.

If on the other hand we follow the other side of the ambiguity of the notion of "totality", and hold that only the parts of the system are truly real, and that the whole is no independent entity but only the sum of its parts,

93. Phenomenology, p. 18. Cf. Hyppolite op. cit. p. 384, and lesser Logic, p. 114.

94. G.D.O'Brien. Hegel on Reason and History, University of Chicago Press, 1975, p. 73.



it is possible to arrive at a different conclusion, viz., that Spirit is history.<sup>95</sup> The Phenomenology becomes an account of history of Spirit from the point of view of totality, that is from the end of history. Spirit is now simply the positive result of a process of evolution.<sup>96</sup> Lukacs cites Engel's view of the Phenomenology to support this view:

"One may call it a parallel of the embryology and paleontology of the mind, a development of individual consciousness through its different stages, set in the form of an abbreviated reproduction of the stages through which the consciousness of man has passed in the course of history" (F.Engels, Feuerbach quoted in Lukács op. cit. p. 468).

One implication of this would have to be that consciousness, as the first moment of subjective spirit, must have existed prior to self-consciousness which results from it, and likewise self-consciousness prior to reason, and so on. This implies both that the elements of Spirit are capable of an independent existence which Hegel denies them, since he is explicit that the moments of subjective Spirit presuppose Spirit as a whole;<sup>97</sup> and that Spirit is not merely realised in history, but is actually generated by it. Hegel is now open to the other standard Marxist objection, that he closed his system, whereas he should have left it open, on the grounds that since Spirit has evolved so far in history, it is probable that it will evolve further.<sup>98</sup> Hegel in point of fact does not deny this in connection

95. This view is held widely, and particularly in connection with the existentialist tendency to identify human reality with time or temporality. Kojève writes "Time is Man and Man is Time" and in the same breath quotes from Hegel's Jena lectures "Spirit is Time" (Kojève, op. cit. p. 138). Cf. also Heidegger, Being and Time (whence Kojève derives many of his interpretations: see Kojève op. cit. p.259); and Sartre, Being and Nothingness, Part 2, Ch.2.

96. Lukács op. cit. p. 472.

97. Phenomenology, p. 264

98. Michael Rosen, in Hegel's Dialectic and its Criticism CUP 1982 p.24, relates the question of the open or closed nature of the system to what he calls the *post festum* paradox, and associates it particularly with Marx and Engels. Cf. note 49 to Chapter 3.

with history.<sup>99</sup> However, there is no suggestion in the Phenomenology that Spirit evolves in the sense that something new emerges which did not exist before.<sup>100</sup> In so far as Hegel's argument is historical (which is the case only of certain stages, notably Culture and Religion), it presents a movement from Spirit in itself or implicit to explicit Spirit for itself, or a movement in which Spirit which exists becomes known, and not a movement in which Spirit is generated from nothing.

The second interpretation I want to mention is often found in connection with existentialism, and sometimes also Marxism: when Marxism and existentialism attempt to join hands Hegel is usually somewhere in the background. The best example of this approach is undoubtedly Alexandre Kojève's much admired Introduction to the Reading of Hegel.<sup>101</sup> Its defining characteristic is that it takes as the Absolute not the Idea, but self-consciousness.<sup>102</sup> It thus takes up the position which Hegel associates especially with Fichte, and with the abstract Absolute generally: that is to say, it takes up the position which Hegel wants to criticise in the Phenomenology more than any other.

99. Philosophy of History, op. cit, p. 86.

100. That is, in the sense defined by Kojève (op.cit, p.87): "there is progress from A to B, if A can be understood from B but B cannot be understood from A". This, Hegel would no doubt comment, is the attitude of the Understanding, which is satisfied only with explanation in terms of efficient cause. (See Ch. 4 below).

101. Basic Books, New York, 1969. Kojève's article on "Tyranny and Wisdom" in Leo Strauss, On Tyranny, Macmillan, London 1963 is also relevant here, especially for its discussion of "mutual recognition".

102. Kojève does not explicitly make self-consciousness the Absolute, but the implicit identification is strong, and visible even in the first sentence of his book which reads simply "Man is Self-Consciousness" (op. cit, p.3). The explicit identification of ('pre-reflective') self-consciousness with the Absolute is made, for example, by Sartre in Being and Nothingness, Methuen 1969 p. xxxii.

The result of this is that one element of subjective Spirit is made into the turning point of the whole book. The structure of the argument is then roughly as follows. Consciousness is the relation of man to nature, and since nature is the opposite of Spirit there is little of interest to say about it. The story gets off the ground only with self-consciousness. Here in contrast to the inert being of consciousness, we find an immense contradiction which is expressed in a fight resulting in the relationship of master and slave. Lordship and Bondage thus becomes the centrepiece of the Phenomenology, and sets up the dilemma that although in self-consciousness I depend only upon myself and am therefore free, and this essential freedom would be contradicted by any relationship to any other being, it is nevertheless the case that in order to experience this freedom I need other being both in the shape of a world which I can shape according to my free will, and in the shape of other self-conscious beings who can recognise my free will. The rest of the Phenomenology is then an account of the working out of this contradiction, in which the essential antagonism of self-consciousnesses towards one another is finally resolved through the French Revolution and Napoleon's establishment of a "universal and homogeneous state" where hostility is resolved into "mutual recognition". The chapter on Religion becomes virtually redundant.

The notion of "mutual recognition" which Hegel mentions only once in Lordship and Bondage<sup>103</sup> and very rarely elsewhere, then becomes exaggerated out of all proportion, and the central aim of the Phenomenology becomes

103. Phenomenology, p. 112: "They recognise themselves as mutually recognising each other": this sentence looks forward to the result of the battle and the phase Hegel later terms universal self-consciousness (see Propadentic, op. cit. p. 78).

to establish this notion. There is an immense literature on the idea. Sartre suggests that Hegel was too optimistic, and argues that self-consciousness will always behave imperialistically towards one another.<sup>104</sup> Simone de Beauvoir argues, though not with great conviction, that mutual recognition should be attainable.<sup>105</sup> Christian existentialists have argued against this that not Lordship and Bondage, but the Unhappy Consciousness should be taken to be the centre of self-consciousness and thus of the Phenomenology, reasoning that if mutual recognition is to be more than a universal 'hallo!' it must be a recognition in each individual of something substantial, and this becomes what Hegel terms the Unchangeable and which these interpreters, mistakenly, take to be God. Judith Shklar's book, though not explicitly existentialist, also makes mutual recognition a central category in an interpretation of the Phenomenology, and we could cite further examples.

The idea of mutual recognition as a panacea, however, is quite foreign to Hegel's thinking, and is much closer to the notion of the general will, for example, than to Hegel's notion of Spirit. Spirit cannot be reduced to self-consciousness. More to the point, Spirit cannot be reduced to anything else, except in a sense to a moment of the Absolute Idea to which it is partial. To attempt to explain it in terms of self-consciousness, or reason or any other less elusive term, is to negate the central proposition which Hegel shares with the ancients, that Spirit is Absolute. The Phenomenology attempts neither to explain nor analytically to deduce Spirit, but to know it: and it is this fact which gives the lie ultimately to any interpretation of the Phenomenology which neglects Hegel's conception of the Absolute, and of its appearance in the Phenomenology as absolute Spirit.

104. Sartre, Being and Nothingness, op. cit. p. 240 ff.

105. Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex, Penguin, 1972, p. 172.

## CHAPTER THREE : Phenomenology

In the preceding chapter it was argued that Hegel's conception of Spirit corresponds to Plato's notion of justice, but defines it instead as Freedom. This, we saw, involved Hegel not only in modifying some of Plato's ideas, but also in revising the classical doctrine of form. For the ancients, the task of philosophy was to know the world of forms, and their existence in this illusory world was regarded perhaps as desirable, but not in any way as essential to the forms themselves. Hegel, by contrast, because of his inclusion of the subjective element, holds that existence in an individual form is essential, that is, *necessary* to an ideal form. Ideal form thus becomes what Hegel calls the 'Idea';<sup>1</sup> and Hegel is committed to demonstrating its necessity.

This leads Hegel to the well-known, and perhaps notorious notion of the self-development of the concept. We encountered this idea earlier in Foster's characterisation of Hegel's dialectic as a dialectic of the object, in contrast to Plato's dialectic of thought only.<sup>2</sup> Hegel expresses it in

1. "The Idea is the concept (Begriff) in so far as the concept gives reality and existence to itself". (From Knox's preface to his translation of Hegel's Philosophy of Right (op. cit), which contains a useful discussion of some of Hegel's terminology. Note, however, that as A.Kojève and others have stressed, Hegel rebels against his contemporaries' specialised use of language, and tries to use words in their everyday meaning. To do the contrary is to assume a superiority of knowledge over the certainty of opinion, which Hegel does not want to do. See Heckman's note in Hyppolite, op. cit. p.xi). Lauer, in his Reading of Hegel's Phenomenology Fordham U.P. 1976 p. 21 comments that "Not, since Plato, one might say, has anyone stressed the primacy of the 'idea' ... as did Hegel"; but in the same breath he negates the notion that differentiates Hegel's Idea from Plato's - that it must be real - by interpreting the 'primacy of the idea' as the primacy of 'ought-to-be-ness over is-ness'.

2. Foster, op.cit. p. 121f : p.75      above.



the Philosophy of History, for example, as follows:

"Philosophy [contrary to the model of merely logical deduction] understands something quite different by the concept; here conceptualisation is the activity of the concept itself, it is no mere concurrence of matter and form which has come from somewhere else" (Quoted in G.D.O'Brien, Hegel on Reason and History, University of Chicago Press, 1975, p. 37).

The notion that Spirit is Freedom, then, implies the apparently contradictory idea that it must be real and that we must be able to demonstrate the necessity of this through the self-development of the concept.<sup>3</sup> It is this idea which lies behind Hegel's notion of phenomenology, which he expounds in the Introduction to the Phenomenology, and which will be the topic of this chapter.

#### (a) Phenomenology in General

Elements of Hegel's idea of phenomenology can be found widely in the writings of his immediate predecessors, including Herder, Lambert, Schiller, Kant, and Fichte. The idea of phenomenology has also been taken over by Husserl and later writers in the so-called phenomenological movement. However, in Hegel's writing it has a meaning which is distinct both from prior and later usage.

3. Hegel often counterposes freedom and necessity in this apparently paradoxical way, but in his view, and in contrast to the existentialist view discussed at the end of the last chapter, when freedom and necessity are understood rationally, rather than from the standpoint of consciousness, they do not in fact contradict each other. See, for example, Hegel's Lesser Logic, op. cit. p. 51f and p. 219f; Philosophy of Spirit, op. cit. p. 241; or Philosophy of History, op. cit. p. 39. Schelling also held that 'Necessity must be in Liberty': see Hyppolite op. cit. p. 28. On the notion of the self development of the concept, see also Phenomenology, p.44.

In the Encyclopaedia, as we have seen, phenomenology appears only as the second moment of subjective spirit. It is the moment of the appearance of subjective spirit to consciousness, which lies between subjective spirit in itself, or the soul, and subjective spirit in and for itself, actual individual Spirit. Phenomenology is thus defined in terms of the attitude of consciousness.

"The subject, more definitely seized, is Spirit. It is Phenomenal when essentially relating to an existent object; in so far as it is Consciousness. The Science of Consciousness is, therefore, called The Phenomenology of Spirit" (Propaedeutic, op. cit. p. 69).

The notion of phenomenology as the science of consciousness comes more or less directly from Kant. As Hoffmeister has argued,

"the position of the Phenomenology of Spirit in the whole of Hegel's system ... corresponds precisely to that which Kant assigned to his Critique of Pure Reason". (quoted in Kaufmann op. cit. p. 164).

Hegel acknowledges his debt to Kant in the Philosophy of Mind.

"Kantian philosophy can be described most precisely as envisaging Spirit as consciousness; it contains essentially the determinations of phenomenology and not of the philosophy of Spirit" (Philosophy of Mind, op. cit. p. 156).

This, however, is also to be taken as a criticism of Kant's position. Kant correctly analyses Spirit into its three essential subjective moments, but views these only from the standpoint of consciousness. This means that the moments of Spirit become objects, since consciousness can only be consciousness of an object. This in turn contradicts Hegel's fundamental assertion that the moments of Spirit are not parts, or to use Kant's word, faculties, which have an autonomous existence, but which exist only as moments of Spirit.<sup>4</sup> A 'philosophy of Spirit' views Spirit not only from

4. Cf. Hyppolite, op. cit. p. 61.

the standpoint of consciousness, which after all is only one moment of Spirit, but also from the stand point of Spirit as a whole.<sup>5</sup> It thus grasps Spirit itself as a whole, and not simply as an aggregation of parts or faculties.

It is partly also in distinguishing phenomenology from philosophy of Spirit in terms of their respective standpoints of consciousness and Spirit that Hegel differs from Husserl and his followers.<sup>6</sup> Husserl's phenomenological reduction, which

"puts, as we say, the world between brackets, excludes the world which is simply there! from the subjects field, presenting in its stead the so-and-so-experienced-perceived-remembered-judged-thought-valued-etc., world, as such the "bracketed" world. Not the world or any part of it appears but the sense of the world" (E.Husserl, Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1929, p. 700) 7.

could be taken without too much difficulty as a description of the way Spirit appears to consciousness in Hegel. Husserl however, goes further than Hegel and asserts that all objective existence is essentially relative to a subject.

"For all objective existence is essentially "relative", and owes its nature to a unity of intention, which being established according to transcendental laws, produces consciousness with its habit of belief and its conviction". (ibid p. 702). 8

5. This may be usefully compared with Hegel's comments on Empiricism in Natural Law p. 58 ff, or Lesser Logic pp 60-65.
6. In so far as it is possible to generalise about such a diverse body of thought. See Kaufmann, op. cit. p. 165.
7. Husserl's article on Phenomenology does not appear in later editions of the Encyclopaedia Britannica.
8. Husserl may not consistently be a subjective idealist. His philosophy however is in general so widely removed from Hegel's that further to contrast their respective views would be of little value here. See Q. Lauer, "Phenomenology: Hegel and Husserl" in Beyond Epistemology Weiss (ed.) Nighoff, The Hague, 1974, pp. 174-197.

This implies that there is only consciousness, and that the "unity of intention" to which objective existence is relative is itself in some sense absolute. Hegel, by contrast, holds that there is more than consciousness, namely Spirit; and that Spirit, not the subject of consciousness, is absolute.

However, in the Phenomenology of Spirit, the term phenomenology has an additional meaning which is not included in the later works, to wit, that it serves as an introduction to the system of philosophy.<sup>9</sup> In Hegel's later work the idea of an introduction to philosophy is separated from the notion of phenomenology, and for example in the "Doctrine of Spirit as an Introduction to Philosophy", which Hegel wrote at Nuremburg, there is no mention of phenomenology. However, in the Phenomenology the two ideas are closely related to each other, in so far as both are related to the central notion of *experience*.<sup>10</sup>

The Phenomenology deals always with two levels of awareness. The first is "phenomenal knowledge." This is usually labelled "for us" in the Phenomenology and corresponds to the later meaning of phenomenology which Hegel uses in the Encyclopaedia and Propaedeutic. The second is "natural consciousness". This is a knowledge which restricts itself to the standpoint of consciousness. While phenomenal knowledge is already philosophical, accepting the notion of the absolute and taking up the standpoint of spirit, natural consciousness does not recognise the Absolute, and is aware only of things.

9. This idea can be found in Kant, and also owes much to Schiller's Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man - see especially the 23rd Letter.
10. The Phenomenology is the "science of the experience of consciousness" (Phenomenology p. 56). The same cannot be said of the phenomenology of the Encyclopaedia and Propaedeutic, where the notion of experience in the sense discussed below is absent.

Everything it observes it treats as a discrete independent entity, not as something which is essentially relative to the Absolute. It has the attitude of subjectivity which Hegel attributes to Kant, Jacobi and Fichte in Faith and Knowledge, which

"turns the beautiful into things - the grove into timber, the images into things that have eyes and do not see, ears and do not hear".  
(Faith and Knowledge, Albany, 1977, p. 58).

The crucial notion of experience, as we shall see, is a combination of both these attitudes.

Phenomenal knowledge can be characterised as a revision of Plato's recollection. Up to a point it is directly parallel to it. Phenomenal knowledge presupposes an acceptance of the Absolute, or a philosophical attitude. If it considers the Absolute in the form of the soul, for example, it may reason as follows. Is it possible to conceive of a being which has soul, which is not, for example courageous? If this is inconceivable, then it follows that courage must be acknowledged to be a component of the soul. This is essentially the Platonic procedure. Hegel then adds to this the stronger notion - which if it is present in Plato is present only in a weak form - that reason must not only be able to discover components of the soul, but to establish more precisely what are the *essential* moments of the soul. This means that it must discover what in a stronger sense is *necessary* to the soul. Phenomenal knowledge must therefore be able to demonstrate the necessity of the parts to the whole and to each other, and to demonstrate that the whole is necessary to the parts.

Hegel explains how his use of the notion of recollection or *Er-innerung* differs from Plato's in the History of Philosophy.



"In one sense recollection (*Erinnerung*) is certainly an unfortunate expression, in the sense, namely, that an object is reproduced which already existed at another time. But recollection has another sense, which is given by its etymology, namely that of making oneself inward, and this is the profound meaning of the word in thought. In this sense it may undoubtedly be said that knowledge of the universal is nothing but a recollection, a going within self, and that we make that which at first shows itself in an external form and determined as a manifold into an inward, a universal, because we go into ourselves and thus bring what is inward into consciousness. With Plato, however, as we cannot deny, the word recollection has constantly the first and empirical sense" (Hegel, Lectures on the History of Philosophy, Vol. 2, London 1894, p. 34).

Referring to the Meno, Hegel goes on to argue that this leads Plato to see knowledge not so much as an internalisation, that is as something with an essential subjective element, but instead as a remembering of something which already exists in quite a full sense, and has merely been temporarily forgotten. This then leads Plato to view the soul as the repository of this forgotten knowledge, and thus to view the soul as a sensuous thing belonging to the individual, not as a universal which belongs to Spirit. Thus recollection, in Plato's view,

"is not thought, for recollection refers to man as a sensuous "this", not as a universal" (ibid, p.35).

Finally, Hegel argues that since the soul in Plato becomes a thing, it is appropriate that he should represent it ultimately through a myth - the myth which he desires from Egyptian culture, according to Hegel, of the immortality of the soul.<sup>11</sup>

In order to transcend this conception in Hegel's view, it is necessary to present the soul as a rational necessity, or as something which is *thought*.<sup>12</sup>

11. Plato, Republic, 608c - 621d - that is, to the end; Plato Phaedo, and Hegel loc. cit.

12. History of Philosophy, Vol II, p. 37.

It is not sufficient simply to be content to find the elements of the soul, or to find all empirical men to conform to the idea of the soul. It is necessary to transcend this finite judgement to the universal judgement that the soul is in itself necessary. Thus Hegel's criticism of Plato here is formally identical to his criticism of Kant for merely finding his categories and his contrasting of Fichte's attempt to deduce them as necessary.

"But to pick up the plurality of categories as a welcome find, taking them e.g. from the various judgements, and complacently accepting them so, is in fact to be regarded as an outrage on Science. Where else should Understanding be able to demonstrate a necessity, if it is unable to do so in its own self, which is pure necessity?" (Phenomenology, p. 143).

However, if phenomenal knowledge is thus platonic recollection but represented as thought or as necessary, and if this adequately describes the phenomenology of the Encyclopaedia, the Phenomenology itself includes the quite separate notion of natural consciousness. This inclusion is also in a sense a modification of Plato's view. If Hegel interprets recollection in a way which makes it more subjective than it could be for Plato, through natural consciousness he returns to the side of substance and views it in a way which differs significantly from Plato's. This difference may be expressed by saying that natural consciousness has certainty rather than opinion, and, more importantly, that this certainty is based not so much on an intuitive grasp of the forms, but on an *Entausserung*<sup>13</sup> of consciousness.<sup>14</sup>

13. *Entausserung* may be translated "objectification", "externalisation" or sometimes as "alienation".
14. Lukacs (op. cit. p. 537 ff) argues that *Entausserung* is "the central philosophical concept of the Phenomenology", and if by this we understand its most original contribution rather than its most dominant idea, we may certainly agree. However, Lukacs emphasises *Entausserung* for reasons which differ from those set out in this chapter. In particular, *Entausserung* becomes especially associated with the Marxist interpretation of it as alienation. Thus, rather than seeing *Entausserung* as essentially a moment of consciousness, Lukacs connects it rather with one of its specific and limited forms, *Bildung*, and hence with history and creative labour rather than with phenomenal knowledge as a whole.

In natural consciousness the object is present in an alien or objective form, that is as a thing. By definition, since it is consciousness, it cannot be anything other than an awareness of things, and it is therefore prevented precisely from seeing things as an externalisation of its own thought. It is a purely passive receiver of knowledge, and exerts no critical judgement - this belongs to reason, not consciousness. It is therefore incapable of experience in the strict sense of the word, because, since it never questions its awareness, it learns nothing from it. The challenge of the Phenomenology then, becomes to demonstrate to this consciousness the necessity of recognising that what it takes to be things are in fact moments of Spirit, and in this sense of its own self. This will constitute experience, which is therefore the result of neither natural consciousness nor phenomenal knowledge separately, but of their combination.

If natural consciousness is thus to be demonstrated to be inadequate, it is nevertheless also the case that Hegel holds it to be an essential moment in knowledge. Knowledge, that is, must be knowledge of an object which takes or has taken a phenomenal form: all knowledge is consciousness. In other words, unless we are to accept the Platonic view that what is known exists "really" in a world which is distinct from phenomena, it is necessary to see knowledge not only as *Erinnerung*, but equally as its direct opposite, as *Entausserung*.

Before we go on to see how Hegel defends this approach in the Introduction to the Phenomenology, we may note that the account offered differs from one common interpretation of the difference between natural consciousness and phenomenal knowledge. This views natural consciousness not so much as an attitude which is an essential moment of phenomenal knowledge, as a real being which in virtue of its ignorance is the target the Phenomenology sets

out to destroy, much as Socrates sets out to destroy Thrasyarchus' sophism in the Republic. This interpretation can lead to a view of the Phenomenology as containing a hierarchy of levels of knowledge. Thus Werner Marx,<sup>15</sup> for example, distinguishes three levels of knowledge, (not two as we have done). Natural consciousness is the level of the uninitiate who has not yet read the Phenomenology. Phenomenal knowledge is the level of the person reading the Phenomenology for the first time. Finally, when we have read and fully digested the Phenomenology we move to the attitude of Science and are ready to proceed to Hegel's Science of Logic.

In contrast to this view we may note firstly that it is not clear that in Hegel's view the last two levels are distinguishable, since he holds that "the way to science is itself already science".<sup>16</sup> More importantly, however, we should note that although we, the readers of the Phenomenology are expected to take the philosophical standpoint of phenomenal knowledge, rather than the certainty of natural consciousness, it is nevertheless the case that both standpoints are essential to the Phenomenology. Natural consciousness does not relate to phenomenal knowledge as error to truth, but as certainty to truth; and in taking up a philosophical attitude we do not leave natural consciousness behind, but understand it as a necessary part of knowledge, and therefore of ourselves.

15. W. Marx. Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit, Harper & Row 1975.

16. Phenomenology p. 56.

This conclusion may seem paradoxical.<sup>17</sup> On the one hand, Hegel is arguing that a premise of phenomenal knowledge is natural consciousness. On the other, he holds that in order for natural consciousness to have experience, it needs an independent stimulus from phenomenal knowledge, which knows the Absolute. The Absolute, which Hegel sets out to demonstrate as a necessity, is equally presupposed. It emerges from natural consciousness, but only if that consciousness is brought into contact with another which knows the Absolute. However, there is no doubt that Hegel is aware of this difficulty. In the following discussion of the Introduction to the Phenomenology we will question the extent to which he overcomes it - and at what price.

(b) Hegel's Introduction

Hegel explains how he intends to overcome this difficulty in the Phenomenology in the Introduction to that work. The Introduction was written before the main text of the Phenomenology, unlike the Preface which was composed later and which is difficult to understand without some knowledge of the text itself. The Introduction, therefore, not the Preface, is the logical beginning of the Phenomenology; and in it Hegel sets out his intentions as much for his own benefit as for his readers. As Hyppolite comments "Hegel thought first for himself".<sup>18</sup>

In Hyppolite's view, the Introduction is to be interpreted literally as an introduction to subjective spirit only, that is, to the phenomenology which reappears in the Philosophy of Spirit.

17. M. Rosen, in Hegel's Dialectic and its Criticism, C.U.P 182 has especially drawn attention to this paradox. See e.g. p. 26 of that work.

18. Hyppolite, op.cit. p.57.



"It is literally an introduction only to the first three moments of the book, that is consciousness, self-consciousness, and reason. The content of the last part of the work, which contains the especially important arguments on Spirit and on religion, exceeds the Phenomenology as the latter is defined *stricto sensu* in the introduction. Hegel seems to have inserted something into the framework of phenomenological development which he had not at first intended to include" (Hyppolite op. cit. p. 4) 19

However, it will be argued in what follows that the approach outlined in the introduction is an approach which is suitable not just for phenomenal knowledge, but also for natural consciousness, and that a phenomenology which involves natural consciousness is consistent with Hegel's entire book, and not just the first three sections. The introduction should therefore be read as an introduction to the entire book; though it may be admitted that Hegel expanded the later sections well beyond his original intentions.<sup>20</sup>

The Introduction divides naturally into two parts. The first gives "some preliminary and general remarks about the nature and necessity of the progression", and the second covers "the method of carrying out the enquiry"<sup>21</sup> We will consider each separately.

19. Cf. also Hyppolite, op. cit. p. 57.

20. Hegel was apparently working on a revision especially of these parts when he died in 1831. (G.R.G.Mure, The Philosophy of Hegel, OUP 1965, p. 65.)

21. Phenomenology, p. 52.

Hegel begins the Introduction with a discussion of a view held by Reinhold, which he had already criticised in the Difference essay. Reinhold argued that knowledge must be conceived of either as an instrument which we use in order to achieve knowledge of the Absolute, or as a medium through which the Absolute appears to us. In either case, knowledge is something which is liable to affect or alter the Absolute in presenting it to us, and it follows therefore that before we claim to know something we ought first to examine the mechanism through which we know it, so that we may add or subtract anything which is omitted or added on to knowledge by that mechanism.

Schelling commented that in Reinhold's philosophy "the whole of his force is wasted in the run, and nothing left for the jump". Hegel, on the other hand, he described by contrast as "a downright categorical kind of being, who tolerates no ceremony with philosophy but, without waiting for such grace before meat, falls to at once with a good appetite".<sup>22</sup> As Caird comments, in philosophy in Hegel's view it is necessary "*à corps perdu hineinzu stürzen*"<sup>23</sup>, that is, roughly, to dive in head first. Hegel explains the reason for this in terms simply of what is meant by truth.

"To be specific, it [Reinhold's view] takes for granted certain ideas about cognition as an *instrument* and a *medium*, and assumes that there is a *difference between ourselves and this cognition*. Above all it presupposes that the Absolute stands on one side and cognition on the other, independent and separated from it, and yet is something real, or in other words it presupposes that cognition which, since it is excluded from the Absolute, is surely outside of the truth as well, is nevertheless true, an assumption whereby what calls itself fear of error reveals itself rather as fear of the truth." (Phenomenology, p. 47).

22. Quoted in E. Caird, Hegel, Blackwood 1883, p. 56.

23. Ibid.

Though this argument is directed specifically against Reinhold's view of knowledge, it can also be and often is taken as a criticism of any propaedeutic, or 'organon'<sup>24</sup> theory of knowledge and especially of Kant's.<sup>25</sup> Hegel can be found directing much the same kind of argument against Kant in the lesser Logic:

"We ought, says Kant, to become acquainted with the instrument, before we undertake the work for which it is to be employed; for if the instrument be insufficient, all our trouble will be spent in vain ... Unless we wish to be deceived by words, it is easy to see what this amounts to. In the case of other instruments, we can try and criticise them in other ways than by setting about the special work for which they are destined. But the examination of knowledge can only be carried out by an act of knowledge. To examine this so-called instrument is the same thing as to know it. But to seek to know before we know is as absurd as the wise resolution of Scholasticus, not to venture into the water until he had learned to swim". (Lesser Logic, p. 14 §10) 26

It is true that from a certain point of view Hegel's argument is intended to apply quite generally. It presupposes Hegel's conception of the Absolute, depending as he puts it upon "the fact that the Absolute alone is true, or the truth alone is absolute". (Phenomenology, p. 47).

This statement can be taken as a romantic defense of the classical approach to philosophy, for only within such an approach is such a position self-evident. Only classical philosophy is certain both that the truth is independent, and at the same time capable of being known. In modern philosophy

24. 'Organon' is a term used by some commentators on this passage (eg. Hyppolite p.5, Habermas op. cit. p.10), derived from the title of Aristotle's logical writings, used to designate an instrument of knowledge.

25. E.g. Richard Norman, Hegel's Phenomenology, SUP, 1976, p. 11  
J. Habermas, Knowledge & Human Interests, Heinemann 1978, Ch. 1.

26. Hegel uses this metaphor again in the same context in the History of Philosophy. See Habermas, op. cit. p. 7.

it is commonly held either that the absolute is in some way unknowable,<sup>27</sup> or alternatively that it may be known by reducing it to some less vague idea (such as for example happiness or utility),<sup>28</sup> so that the absolute in being known loses its independence. In so far as the Absolute is known, it is known literally into oblivion, since it can everywhere be replaced by whatever more concrete notion it has been reduced to or explained by. It is in this sense that only classical philosophy is philosophy in the true sense of the word, since only it is a love of knowledge which respects the independence of its object, while modern philosophy can better be described as mere desire for knowledge, a desire which would be satisfied by the consumption, that is destruction of its object.<sup>29</sup>

Hegel, however, does not merely dismiss the claims of modern philosophy, but goes on to ask how the apparently 'adventitious and arbitrary' ideas associated with the Absolute are to be defended. To one who simply rejects the idea of the Absolute out of hand - Hume, for example - it is scarcely

27. In Hume for example, statements about the Absolute, such as God exists, are absurd since they are neither matters of fact nor pure relations of ideas. Similarly, in Kant, certain manifestations of the Absolute (eg. God, the thing-in-itself, sublime beauty) are relegated to the unknowable world of noumena (See S. Körner, Kant, Penguin, p. 167). Hegel makes this point in explicit connection with Kant, Jacobi, and Fichte in Faith and Knowledge trans. Cerf & Harris, Albany 1977 p. 56.
28. Hegel in his earlier works is particularly concerned to oppose "Eudaemonism", in which happiness is the anchor for rational thought. However, the argument suggested here could equally be applied to "freedom" in J.S. Mill's essay On Liberty, or to "prudence" or "Life" in Hobbes' Leviathan, or any of the various interpretations of the notion of "utility" in utilitarian thought.
29. Hegel takes this view especially of what he calls "Eudaemonism" in Natural Law and Faith and Knowledge. "Locke and the Eudaemonists transformed philosophy into empirical psychology". (Faith and Knowledge p. 63.)

enough to say that knowledge of the absolute is simply different, and that we may choose it in preference to an ordinary or empirical way of looking at things. On the other hand, we can hardly locate the seeds of Absolute within such an ordinary view, since if we reduce it to the ordinary view it is no longer different from it, while if we do not reduce it to the ordinary view, then we must say in what sense it is different and deal with it as such, as "what it is in and for itself".<sup>30</sup>

"It is for this reason that an exposition of how knowledge makes its appearance will have to be undertaken". (Phenomenology, p. 49).

It is in virtue of this conclusion that we must note that it is significant that Hegel has chosen to direct his criticism specifically at Reinhold, not Kant. In proposing a return to the point of view of consciousness, that is to the appearance of knowledge, he is effectively taking up a Kantian position. In place of the view of the Absolute as substance, Hegel is stressing also the essential importance of the Absolute as subject, ie. of consciousness. As Hyppolite writes,

"[In Schelling] phenomenal knowledge remains cut off from absolute knowledge. Hegel, by contrast, returns to phenomenal knowledge, that is, to the knowledge of common consciousness, and claims to show how it necessarily leads to absolute knowledge, or, even, how it is an absolute knowledge which does not yet know itself as such. But this implies a return to the point of view of consciousness, the point of view that was Kant's and Fichte's. Having formally criticised all propaedeutics, Hegel now insists on the need to place oneself at the point of view of natural consciousness and to lead it gradually to philosophic knowledge: one cannot begin with absolute knowledge". (Hyppolite op. cit. p.6f) .

It is mistaken, therefore, to read the Phenomenology as in any fundamental

30. Phenomenology, p. 49.



sense a criticism of Kant. This is not to deny that there are a number of arguments in the Phenomenology which are either directed against Kant or which can be taken as criticisms of Kant. Nor is it to deny that Hegel's position is fundamentally different from Kant's. However, as we have seen, Hegel's central criticism of Kant is that he gives only a phenomenology and not a philosophy of Spirit. Hegel's Phenomenology is also only a phenomenology, and to get a full sense of his opposition to Kant it is necessary to understand his Phenomenology as only one moment of his system, the system seen from the (Kantian) standpoint of consciousness. The major difference between Hegel's and Kant's phenomenologies, then, is that Hegel's proceeds to a Logic which presents the Absolute in its truth, or in and for itself. Hegel's phenomenology both assumes the existence of and sets out to demonstrate and to know this Absolute; while Kant's holds the absolute to be unknowable.<sup>31</sup> One conclusion which follows from this is that if it is true, as was argued earlier, that it is misleading to emphasise any particular moment of Spirit at the expense of others, it may be equally misleading to emphasise the Phenomenology over other parts of Hegel's system - whether we are considering the earlier system of a Phenomenology followed by a Logic or the later system which consisted of a Logic, a Philosophy of Nature, and a Philosophy of Spirit. The Phenomenology is only an introduction to Hegel's system, and views it only from the standpoint

31. See Faith and Knowledge, p. 61

of consciousness.<sup>32</sup>

However, if the Phenomenology is thus limited, we should also note that it is by the same token broader than the Kantian phenomenology. The Critique of Pure Reason can be characterised as a presentation of consciousness to consciousness, in so far as the whole discussion is of the content of an individual consciousness. This is exactly what Hegel does in the section of the Encyclopaedia on Phenomenology. The Phenomenology of Spirit, by contrast, is a presentation of spirit to a consciousness which is itself already implicitly not just consciousness but Spirit. The Phenomenology thus rightly includes a phenomenological discussion of all of Spirit, that is of subjective, objective, and absolute Spirit, and there is no reason why it should be constrained to subjective Spirit as Hyppolite suggests. Hegel himself summarises the position in the lesser Logic as follows:

"In my Phenomenology of Spirit, which on that account was at its publication described as the first part of the System of Philosophy the method adopted was to begin with the first and simplest phase of Spirit, immediate consciousness, and to show how that stage gradually of necessity worked onward to the philosophic point of view, the necessity of that view being proved in the process. But in these circumstances it was impossible to restrict the quest to the mere form of consciousness. For the stage of philosophical knowledge is the richest in material and organisation, and therefore, as it came before us in the shape of a result, it presupposed the existence of the concrete foundations of consciousness, such as individual and social morality, art and religion. (Lesser Logic, op. cit, p. 45f).

32. The idea that Phenomenology contains the whole of Hegel's thought is supported particularly by those who (like the existentialists) wish to put the stress on the freedom of the individual, which, if it is to be found anywhere in Hegel's thought, must be found within Spirit. This attitude then fails to find freedom in other dimensions of Hegel's work. In particular it is unable to combine the notions of freedom with either nature or with law. Thus Kojève, for example, rejects Hegel's philosophy of nature (Kojève, op. cit. p. 146 and 133n). Also in so far as he describes Hegel's ideal state as "universal and classless", Kojève effectively rejects the Philosophy of Right, which makes diversity and class essential to the state. This attitude, much like Rousseau's, can lead either to authoritarianism or anarchism, depending upon whether the emphasis is put on "universal" or "classless", and has little in common with Hegel's view.

When Hegel goes on to describe the way knowledge appears to consciousness, then, his view seems to have little in common with Kant, and has more of the imagery of Plato's cave or of Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress than of critical philosophy. He says

"Now, because it has only phenomenal knowledge as its object, this exposition seem not to be science, free and self-moving in its own shape; yet from this standpoint it can be regarded as the path of the natural consciousness which presses forward to true knowledge, or as the way of the soul which journeys through the series of its own configurations as though they were stations appointed for it by its own nature, so that it may purify itself for the life of the Spirit, and achieve finally, through a completed experience of itself, the awareness of what it really is in itself".  
(Phenomenology, p. 49).

This journey, naturally enough, will only be undergone by someone who wants to make it. The 'natural consciousness', therefore, must be a sceptic, otherwise he will not bother to enquire after the truth. Further, his scepticism must be profound. The modern sceptic with his 'shilly-shallying',<sup>33</sup> about such questions as whether we can assume the sun will rise tomorrow is not serious in his scepticism. The ancient sceptic, by contrast, is one who has discovered to his utter dismay that that which he held to be truth is in fact illusion.<sup>34</sup> To be capable of philosophical education (*Bildung*) natural consciousness must be a sceptic in the latter sense. It must have experienced the "loss of its own self", perhaps through the Socratic *elenchus*. "Bifurcation is the source of the need for philosophy".

33. Phenomenology, p. 49.

34. Hegel discusses the relation of ancient to modern scepticism in his Jena review article on Schulze titled 'Relation of scepticism to philosophy, account of its various modifications and comparison of the most modern with ancient scepticism', and also in the lesser Logic, p. 64 §39.

35. Quoted, e.g., by Kaufmann, op. cit, p. 74.

as Hegel said in a well known passage in the Difference essay. Philosophy presupposes for its very existence not mere academic doubt, but experiential despair; and later in the section of Spirit dealing with tragedy Hegel will attempt to give an account of the origins of this despair.

Scepticism alone, however, is still not enough. There is no necessary connection between the proof that what was held to be true is false, and that something else is in fact true. The Socratic *elenchus* may shake fixed opinion, but it does not necessarily give rise to knowledge, except to one who chooses also to seek knowledge. In Plato's Republic for example, Thrasymachus experiences the *elenchus*, but it is then left up to Aedimantus and Glaucon, Socrates' supporters and friends, to go on to seek the true view.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, when scepticism appears as a "universal form of the World-Spirit",<sup>37</sup> as Hegel puts it, in the Roman Empire, it is an attitude which holds the truth to be that everything can be reduced to absurdity, or that there is no truth. It is a viewpoint which is not opinionated, but which nevertheless is not yet philosophical.

It is in order to overcome the separation between the negative criticism of scepticism and the positive aim of philosophy that Hegel introduces what is perhaps the most original, and certainly the most controversial idea in his Introduction: the idea of *determinate negation*. Speaking of the scepticism of the Roman period, he comments

36. Republic, 336b-367d.

37. Phenomenology, p. 121 - referring in fact to stoicism, of which scepticism is the direct counterpart.

"This is just the scepticism which only ever sees pure nothingness in its results and abstracts away from the fact that this nothingness is specifically the nothingness of that *from which it results*. For it is only when it is taken as the result of that from which it emerges, that it is, in fact the true result; in that case it is itself a *determinate* nothingness, one which has a *content*. The scepticism that ends up with the bare abstraction of nothingness or emptiness cannot get any further from there, but must wait to see whether something new comes along and what it is, in order to throw it too into the same empty abyss. But when, on the other hand, the result is conceived as it is in truth, namely as a *determinate* negation, a new form has thereby immediately arisen, and in the negation the transition is made through which the progress through the complete series of forms come about".

(Phenomenology, p. 51).

Finally, to complete the circle, Hegel remarks that only full knowledge of the Absolute will satisfy a consciousness which has begun this journey.

"But the goal is as necessarily fixed for knowledge as the serial progression; it is the point where knowledge no longer needs to go beyond itself, where knowledge finds itself, ~~where~~ Notion (*Begriff*) corresponds to object and object to Notion. Hence the progress towards this goal is also unhalting, and short of it no satisfaction is to be found at any of the stations on the way".

(Phenomenology, p. 51)

The notion of determinate negation, and the associated notion of experience, or what commentators have often and perhaps misleadingly dubbed the method of "immanent critique",<sup>38</sup> is quite central to Hegel's thought. Nevertheless,

38. The notion of immanent critique seems to have originated in the 'Frankfurt school'. It perhaps also has resonances with a debate about the nature of Marx's Capital, insofar as the latter is held either to be scientific political economy in relation to the pre-scientific work of Smith, Ricardo, et al. (Althusser For Marx, NLB 1977) or essentially a critique of political economy or of the very idea of political economy (eg. John Holloway and Sol Picciotto, The State and Capital, London, Edward Arnold 1977) or both at the same time (e.g. Coletti "Marxism and the Dialectic" in New Left Review No. 93). It is not fruitful, however, to look to Hegel for a solution of that debate. Capital's basic structure is of an analytical deduction from a first (and quite indefensible) premise, that abstract labour time is the source of all value, and criticises other positions in view of this absolute truth. Hegel is fundamentally opposed to such analytical deductions, for many reasons some of which will be pointed out in due course here.



it has been interpreted in a wide variety of ways. Before we go on to see how Hegel defends it in his discussion of the method of the Phenomenology, we will consider some of these interpretations and some corresponding criticisms of Hegel's position. How and in what sense can a negative criticism produce a positive result? And in what sense can this result be said to be necessary?

One fairly widespread line of interpretation gives what we might call a minimal reading of determinate negation.<sup>39</sup> Hegel is not making the strong and apparently incomprehensible assertion that negation can of itself produce a positive result, but only that it can distinguish truth from error. Harris, for example, characterises the Phenomenology as

"a sequence in which the breakdown of each form of consciousness leaves the germ of the next one as its natural residue" (H. Harris, Hegel's Development, OUP 1972, p. 321)

Peter Singer expresses a similar view, adding in the idea that the various stages of the Phenomenology are progressively less wrong, and that we finally arrive at absolute knowledge, which is right. The Phenomenology in his view describes

"the development of consciousness as a development towards forms of consciousness that more fully grasp reality, culminating in absolute knowledge" (P. Singer, Hegel, OUP 1983, p. 48). 40

39. In the following discussion I mention a number of authors, but do not mean to suggest that there is a consistent school of thought on the matter, or that there is a strong logical progression between the various ideas mentioned.
40. This may also be connected with the idea that the Phenomenology is 'evolutionary'. Kaufmann (op. cit. p. 148), as well as some other authors already cited, gives another version of this interpretation.

The notion of absolute knowledge in this kind of interpretation generally has a double meaning. It is either what is not wrong, or it is the totality of all the previous modes of knowledge, and often both. The idea that Absolute knowledge is not wrong can be found for example in Norman's writing. Absolute knowledge is a coincidence of subject and object, or as Hegel says, of object and notion. It is arrived at through an "internal critique"<sup>41</sup> which like Platonic dialogue criticise false standpoints not by comparing them to a true position, but by using their own criteria and allowing them to fall by their own weight as a result of their internal contradictions. The residue then, by implication is true. Kojève also takes this view of absolute knowledge, and dares to push it to its limit. In his view absolute knowledge is something which vanishes as soon as it is achieved, since it consists only in the knowledge that man is free, in relation to which there is no other truth, since to assign any further predicate to man is to make him dependent on that predicate, and this would contradict the truth of his freedom, or as Sartre puts it, would be in 'bad faith'.<sup>42,43</sup> Absolute knowledge then appears either as mere contingency or as positive absurdity,<sup>44</sup>

41. Norman, op. cit, p. 22.

42. Kojève, op. cit. p. 160n (this is a note added to the second French edition)

43. Sartre, Being and Nothingness, Part I Ch. 2, or Existentialism and Humanism.

44. It is worth noting in connection with this that Kojève, like Hegel, sees absolute knowledge or wisdom as a kind of satisfaction. (see p. 3/ above). However, unlike Hegel, he connects this satisfaction directly to natural desire, so that it is achieved precisely through the consumption of its object. The satisfaction Hegel has in mind, however, is, like Plato's, Erotic rather than merely desiring. Natural consciousness is satisfied when it finds and recognises the absolute, not when it consumes it. It finds the object of its love, which is truth, and thence it becomes a philosopher, a lover of truth, and this satisfies it. Kojève does not ever achieve a philosophical attitude in this Hegelian sense of the world, since he finds in truth not an independent object worthy of respect, but only a dependent thing, whose dependence is proven precisely in its destruction or consumption. The removal of the sense of independence from the object is equivalent to the end of history mentioned in Kojève's note.

and its virtue lies in the fact that by communing only with itself and being indifferent to (or free from) any objectivity, it avoids positive error.

Conversely, it is possible to identify in both Kojève and Norman the idea that absolute knowledge is to be understood as the totality of all other types for claims to knowledge. Thus Norman comments

"Hegel does *not* regard Absolute Knowledge as some new and qualitatively different mode of cognition which consciousness is to reach by leaving behind all its previous forms of experience. On the contrary, Absolute Knowledge is nothing but the totality of these previous forms" (Norman, op. cit. p.107).

This view, however, raises an obvious difficulty, because all previous forms of experience have been shown by internal critique to be false. If there is to be any content to Absolute knowledge, then there must be some 'residue', as Harris said, left over after criticism, which is the True. Thus Lauer, for example, who characterises the Phenomenology as a series of worthwhile dead ends, comments that

"As the Phenomenology progresses, not only will the dead ends become tantalizingly numerous, but we shall have to resist the temptation to skip any of them. In doing this we shall note, as we have already, that the phenomenological dead-end street is any "certainty" which is inadequate to its own content or "truth" This will mean not only successively negating certainties for the sake of truth, but also making sure not to loose the truth contained in each certainty". (Q. Lauer, A Reading of Hegel's Phenomenology, Fordham U.P. 1976, p.90).

Broadly then, and perhaps at risk of doing injustice individually to the authors cited, we may say that in this general line of interpretation Hegel's argument is very much like Plato's, but while the only knowledge which Socratic critical dialectic produced was a knowledge of ignorance, Hegel dares to go beyond Plato and argue that he can achieve a positive result using what appears to be the same method. This argument is then, as Popper has pointed out, clearly objectionable. To refute a position is in Popper's view to confront it with a logically incompatible observa-

tion. This results in a theory which is acknowledged to contain a contradiction. This can indeed produce some further result, but in Popper's view it is possible to deduce anything from a theory which contain a contradiction so that no positive or specific result may be deduced. Refutation, therefore, is at best an heuristic device for suggesting better theories, but cannot be a logical one for inferring them.<sup>45</sup>

However, those who are acquainted with Hegel's logical precision will find it hard to believe that he has not at least considered this objection, especially since it seems to correspond more or less to the problem he himself set up in the fourth paragraph of the Introduction. There is every reason to adopt, at least temporarily, the attitude Kaufmann said he took up on first reading the Phenomenology

"the point was to comprehend the incomprehensible, not to read unsympathetic criticism; and the presumption was that his critics had not understood Hegel, which was true enough in most cases". (Kaufmann op.cit. p.10).

Hyppolite anticipates Popper's criticism and forestalls it by arguing that Hegel does not attempt to generate the whole, that is Spirit, from the criticism of its parts, but rather presupposes the whole. Determinate negation then has the function of referring a partial view to the (concrete) whole to which it is partial, and negates only the negative aspect of its partiality, the arrogance which supposes a partial view to have its own independent reality.

"If we assume a term A, can its negation, not - A, engender a new term B? It seems not. In our opinion we must assume that the whole is always immanent in the development of consciousness. Negation is creative because the posited term has been isolated and thus was itself a kind of negation. From this it follows

45. K.Popper, "What is Dialectic?" in Mind, 49 (1940) p. 403 ff.  
See also, M. Rosen, op. cit. p. 33 and p.39.

that the negation of that term allows the whole to be recaptured in each of its parts. Were it not for the imminence of the whole in consciousness, we should be unable to understand how negation can truly engender a content". (Hyppolite, op. cit. p. 15).

There can be no doubt that if determinate negation is to be defended, it must be along these lines. However, we cannot be satisfied simply to presuppose the whole, since Hegel has implied that he will demonstrate its necessity. If he fails to do this he does not get beyond Plato. We must ask in what sense the whole can be said to be necessary - and we will not be satisfied with Kaufmann's minimalisation of Hegel's position, which explains away the notion of necessity by arguing that "Hegel often uses the term 'necessary' quite illicitly as the opposite of 'utterly arbitrary'".<sup>46</sup>

Kojève interprets the necessity of the Phenomenology as historically retrospective. History - for in Kojève's view Spirit and history are identified - is as Hegel says,<sup>47</sup> a 'free contingent process', and since it is composed of individual free actions it cannot be said to be necessary. However, each action is intelligible in terms of the intentional structure of human action, and history therefore while not necessary is not arbitrary either, but has a sense, and can be understood in terms of the goals of historical individuals.<sup>48</sup>

46. Kaufmann, op. cit. p. 371, cf. Lauer, op. cit. p. 32

47. Phenomenology, p. 492,

48. Thus the 'World Historical Individual' in Hegel's Philosophy of History is not one who furthers the development of reason as opposed to passion in history, as a comparable figure in Kant's 'Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose', but one who is just as arbitrarily passionate as he is reasonable; and yet at the same time is 'great' in a larger sense than merely powerful. Cf. S. Avineri, Hegel's Theory of the Modern State, CUP 1974, p. 233, and G.D.O'Brien, Hegel on Reason and History.



The Phenomenology is thus necessary only in a limited sense, that since we are where we are it is necessary that certain historical developments should have taken place.<sup>49</sup> We may note in this approach (a) that unless there is said to be a hidden purpose in history according to a 'cunning of reason', necessity disappears in contingency, and (b) that it nevertheless has the virtue of pointing away from a rational or causal conception of necessity towards a more hermeneutic kind which stresses interpretation over causal explanation.

Findlay characterises the necessity of the Phenomenology in various ways, some of which are similar to Kojève's, others not. In his Foreword to Miller's translation of the Phenomenology he compares it to the necessity of a mathematical proof. He is well aware that Hegel has specifically rejected this possibility,<sup>50</sup> but argues that just as there may be several ways of presenting a mathematical proof, while in each particular presentation each step must be logically necessary, so the Phenomenology is also only one way of presenting a proof of Spirit, but that Hegel chooses this way because

"it was the path that *had* been taken by the World Spirit in past history, and that he been rehearsed in the consciousness of Hegel, in whom the notion of Science first became actual". (Phenomenology, p. vi).

49. When Marx commented that the limits of dialectical method were seen in the fact that it could only interpret, not predict, he must have had the same kind of reasoning in mind. "Man's reflection on the forms of life, and consequently, also, his scientific analysis of those forms, takes a course directly opposite to that of their actual historical development. He begins, post festum, with the results of the process of development ready to hand before him. (Marx, Capital, Vol I, Lawrence and Wishart, 1974, p.80. Cf also p. 668, and p.551.).

50. Phenomenology, p. 34.

Elsewhere Findlay has offered an apparently different view of the sense of the necessity of the Phenomenology.

"A study of Hegel's dialectical practice will show, further, that in spite of anything he may *say* regarding their necessary, scientific character, his transitions are only inevitable in the rather indefinite sense in which there is necessity and inevitability in a work of art" (Findlay, Hegel; a Re-Examination. Collier 1962, p.71).

Lauer comments on this:

"What we need, perhaps, is something akin to but stronger than Findlay's notion of artistic necessity. In the contemplation of a great work of art - a statue, a painting, a poem, a symphony - there is an awareness on the part of one who looks with taste and looks long and hard that "nothing else will do"; each detail *demands* each other detail" (Lauer, op. cit. p.33).

In so far as Spirit is beautiful, we must confirm that this is true. As

Haym commented in 1857 of the Phenomenology,

"I call it a *work of art of knowledge* ... It is, I say, the *presentation of the universe as a beautiful, living cosmos*. After the manner of Greek philosophy it wants to show how in the world as a whole all parts serve and write into a harmonic order". (quoted in Kaufmann, op. cit. p. 130).

Haym's comment, however, gives only half the story. Hegel wants not just to portray the universe as a harmony and a manifestation of a living Spirit, but also in addition to Greek philosophy and in accordance with the subjective demands of the modern age to demonstrate its necessity. Thus the weakness of Lauer's argument also becomes apparent. The notion of beauty he describes is precisely the Greek notion in which the beautiful work of art is the most perfect representation of an ideal form and in which the fact that it was executed by an individual person is most effectively hidden. In the modern view, by contrast, the individual artist and his subjective intentions are essentially part of the work of art, and far from appreciating it as perfect, we appreciate it as essentially individual, perhaps even as unique.<sup>51</sup> Thus, by making necessity into something intuited, Lauer avoids

51. In so far as the reproduction is inferior to the original, and loses its individual touches, and perhaps has the effect precisely of making the work too perfect, and hence uninteresting.

the central point that this necessity is not just objective perfection, but also subjective thought<sup>52</sup>. Spirit is not only a substance to be appreciated, but also a subject to be realised and it must therefore be possible to know it in subjective terms, that is, not so much as a harmony as a necessity.

An alternative to the point of view of Lauer et.al. has been proposed by Michael Rosen, in his book Hegel's Dialectic and its Criticism, which is perhaps the best discussion available of the sense of the necessity of Hegel's work. Unfortunately, since it focusses on the two Logics it discusses the issue in slightly different terms than we need to here, and is not especially helpful on the central notion of experience which appears only in the Phenomenology. Nevertheless it will be worth rehearsing some of his central arguments here.

Rosen sees the central aim of Hegel's philosophy as transforming representations (*Vorstellungen*) into thoughts which are known cognitively, and therefore rationally and as necessary rather than merely intuitively. He then distinguishes two ways in which this move - which <sup>w</sup>he encountered earlier as a move from certainty to truth - can be interpreted. In the first place it may be taken to be *transformative*. Hegelian philosophy warrants opinion through a process involving two steps:

"(a) We have a *Vorstellung* of X. That is to say we perceive an object X only imperfectly rationally, or we have only an abstract or reflective judgement of X.

(b) /

52. See note 1 to Ch. 3 above.

- (b) Dialectical philosophy treats the *Vorstellung* of X in such a way that it is transformed into a Thought, and hence our vision of X becomes a fully cognitive one". (M. Rosen op. cit. p. 63).

This is the common view. Rosen then contrasts the *generative* approach, which has three steps:

- "(a) We have a *Vorstellung* of X.
- (b) An autonomous cognition of X is developed out of the notion. This occurs either unconsciously (as in the course of the development of the sciences) or, when Spirit has reached the possibility of 'pure knowledge', as the free evolution of thought in the Science of Logic.
- (c) In virtue of the knowledge developed in step (b) our conception of X is transformed." (ibid. p. 64).

As Rosen points out, there are a good number of passages in Hegel's writings which can be cited in support of both views. Rosen himself, however, finds fault with both. The first version is committed to the *Vorstellungen* it actually perceives, and has difficulty in portraying these in any strong sense as necessary, as Plant for example has pointed out. The second version then appears to be closer to Hegel's true intention since it takes on board the idea of the self-development of the concept independently of any *Vorstellung*. Hegel appears to adopt a notion which he in other circumstances rejects, namely that pure thought is capable of generating a real content.

"We acknowledge thereby that the Thought, and specifically the notion is the infinite form - that free creative activity which can realise itself without the need for a material present outside itself". (Hegel, lesser Logic, quoted by Rosen, p. 68).

Rosen ultimately rejects this notion as a "sheer Neo-Platonic fantasy".<sup>53</sup>

53. Ibid, p. 179.

In terms of Hegel's Science of Logic, which is beyond the scope of this work, he may perhaps be right. However, in terms of the Phenomenology we shall have to ask whether it is in fact accurate to portray Hegel's aim as either simply Platonic or alternatively as 'hyperintuitionist' (as Rosen terms the notion of self-generating logic). Hegel, after all, is dealing not with mere *Vorstellungen* or representations in the Phenomenology, but with certainties which are themselves intuitions of a whole, which is Spirit. Thus we are referred back to Hyppolite's suggestion that the whole is presupposed by the entire Phenomenology, and we must, as we turn now to examine Hegel's own description of his method, attempt to understand what is meant by this.

Hegel begins his discussion of the "method of carrying out the enquiry",<sup>54</sup> which method he stresses is appropriate only "since our object is phenomenal knowledge",<sup>55</sup> by reposing his original question about the possibility of true knowledge in terms now of truth criteria. If we are to examine phenomenal knowledge, by what criteria will we judge the validity of our examination? If we import our own, there is no reason why phenomenal knowledge should accept our criteria, but if we do not then our examination will be uncritical, and we will only understand, not judge. This contrast between understanding and interpreting is one which has more recently been brought to academic

54. Phenomenology, p. 52.

55. Ibid. The Introduction should not, in other words, be taken as an expression of a generalised Hegelian method but only of the method of the Phenomenology, which he does not in fact use anywhere else.



attention through the hermeneutic tradition.<sup>56</sup> The problem arises in the examination of any other consciousness, in so far as I can only understand a consciousness through sharing and identifying with its own viewpoint, yet since consciousness is essentially a passive awareness, I am thereby committed to suspending my own judgement. I can criticise only by ceasing to identify and thereby to understand. The problem is doubled, however, if I try to interpret the consciousness of a world which is historically remote, which like ancient Greece displays different politics, ethics, religion, and art. That is to say, it is especially relevant to anyone who is considering the revival or revision of ancient ideas.

Hegel firstly argues firmly for identification and suspension of judgement. We are after all examining consciousness, and there is no difficulty in arguing that we must take up its standpoint, which is the uncritical one. It may perhaps seem that if we describe consciousness, there is also necessarily involved a subjective judgement that this description is a true one. Hegel does not deny this, but argues that the distinction between what an object is in-itself and what it is for consciousness, upon which this judgement is based, is a distinction which falls within consciousness itself.

56. See W. Dilthey, *The Rise of Hermeneutics*, in P. Connerton, (ed.), *Critical Sociology*, Penguin 1976. I do not mean to argue that hermeneutics in general insists that identification with the subject of a meaning is essential to understanding this meaning. This position does however seem to be taken by some writers - Quentin Skinner, for example. See Rosen, *op. cit.*, Ch. 1 for a discussion of ways the hermeneutic tradition has attempted to resolve or develop this question.

"Consciousness provides its own criterion from within itself, so that the investigation becomes a comparison of consciousness within itself, for the distinction made above falls within it".  
(Phenomenology, p.53).

It is this idea which commentators seem to refer to as the notion of immanent or internal critique.<sup>57</sup> It is, as Hegel has presented it so far, barely distinguishable from the negative moment of Platonic dialectic. However, Hegel goes on to explain how he thinks it is possible to extract a positive result from this simple comparison of consciousness with itself. This possibility is found in the double nature of consciousness, of being both passive reflection of an object and yet as essential to and constitutive of the object, that is consciousness of a being in itself and a being-for us.

"Something is *for it* the *in itself*; and knowledge, or the being of the object for consciousness is, *for it*, another moment. Upon this distinction, which is present as a fact, the examination rests. If the comparison shows that these two moments do not correspond to one another, it would seem that consciousness must alter its knowledge to make it conform to the object. But, in fact, in the alteration of the knowledge, the object alters for it too, for the knowledge which was present was essentially a knowledge of the object, as the knowledge changes, so too does the object, for it essentially belonged to this knowledge. Hence it comes to pass that what it previously took to be the in itself is not an in itself, or that it was only an in itself for consciousness" (Phenomenology, p. 54)

Hegel concludes

"In as much as the new true object issues from it, this dialectical movement which consciousness exerts on itself and which affects both its knowledge and its object, is precisely what is called *experience* [*Erfahrung*]" (Phenomenology, p. 55).

We must distinguish the way this movement appears to us and to natural consciousness. Natural consciousness takes itself to be purely passive reflection, and does not therefore see the object as something constituted by its con-

57. For example, Charles Taylor, Hegel, CUP 1977, p. 129; Habermas, op. cit. Ch. I; Richard Norman, op. cit. p. 22.

sciousness, whose being lies at least in some partial sense in being perceived. Therefore, when it comes across a new object it is merely passively conscious of it too, and it does not imagine that it has anything to do with this new object. It is not seeking anything or questioning its awareness, so it can learn nothing from it, and it cannot strictly be said to experience anything. Experience, in Hegel's view, is not something which happens to us (as in 'I had an experience') but something which we create for ourselves, ('I experienced' , in the active voice), so long as we have enquiring or sceptical minds. Natural consciousness is, in point of fact, by definition unaware of 'determinate negation', that is of producing a new object through its own thought, and this awareness can be introduced into the phenomenology only by us<sup>58</sup> or through the attitude of phenomenal knowledge. Determinate negation in practice is experience.<sup>59</sup>

"This exposition of the course of experience contains a moment in virtue of which it does not seem to agree with what is ordinarily understood by experience. This is the moment of transition from the first object and the knowledge of it, to the other object, which experience is said to be about. Our account implied that our knowledge of the first object, or the being *for-consciousness* of the first in-itself, itself becomes the second object. It usually seems to be the case, on the contrary, that our experience of the untruth of the first notion comes by way of a second object which we came upon by chance and externally, so that our part in all this is simply *apprehension* of what it is in and for itself. From the present point of view, however, the new object shown itself to have come about through a *reversal of consciousness itself*. (Phenomenology, p. 55)

It is this latter interpretation that is contributed by 'us', the philosophers who adopt the standpoint of Spirit.

58. For this reason it is mistaken to characterise Hegel's phenomenological method as merely descriptive of reality. On the contrary, Hegel explicitly contributes a special ordering and interpretation of experience, and the Phenomenology is inconceivable without this. (Cf. Kojève, op. cit. Ch. 7 and Kenley Royce Dove's article on "Hegel's Phenomenological Method", in Review of Metaphysics, June 1970, vol. xxiii, No. 4).

59. Phenomenology, p. 56.

"This way of looking at the matter is something contributed by us, by means of which the succession of experiences through which consciousness passes is raised into a scientific progression - but it is not known to the consciousness that we are observing" (ibid).

The necessity which the Phenomenology wants to demonstrate is the necessity of the whole, seen as a process of becoming or from the standpoint of consciousness by us, who already have an intuition of the whole.

"For it, what has thus arisen it exists only as an object; for us it appears at the same time as a movement and a process of becoming.

Because of this necessity, the way to Science is itself already Science, and hence, in virtue of its content, is the science of the experience of consciousness". (Phenomenology, p. 56).

Hyppolite, in other words, was right in arguing that the whole is presupposed by the Phenomenology, and that the necessity of the Phenomenology lies in the necessity of the parts to the whole. If we cannot demonstrate this necessity to natural consciousness, we will have no grounds for disputing that they are independent entities, and will have to abandon the notion of Spirit as their ground. Let us conclude this discussion by asking once again, firstly, what does this mean for Hegel's method, and secondly, what ultimately is the rational ground of the necessity of the whole?

In answer to the first question, we should recall that although the notion of experience is derived partly from Plato's recollection, Hegel's (*Erinnerung*), it also includes the exact opposite, that is externalisation, objectification, or alienation (*Entausserung*). Recollection is the work of the philosophers who grasp the whole, and it is parallel to the task of Plato's philosophers in seeking knowledge of ideal forms. However, as we have already noted, Plato holds that form exists independently and can be known by anyone who cares to take up a philosopher's attitude. Hegel denies this and holds that form is not merely substance, but also is essentially subject or for consciousness. This dimension is included in the Phenomenology

through natural consciousness, for which the object appears essentially as an object, or in itself. This is an *Entausserung* in a double sense. For us, it is an objectification, since we know the object to belong essentially to consciousness and we therefore see the object as consciousness made into an object. For the natural consciousness it is an alienation, since the object appears to it to be independent and therefore alien, not as its own possession.

This, it seems to me, constitutes a methodological proposition which is different from both the possibilities offered by Michael Rosen. Rosen offers an account of Hegel's method which is quite consistent with Hegel's view of *Erinnerung*, but which omits the notion of *Entausserung*.

Thus, what Rosen calls the 'transformative' approach is effectively no different from *Erinnerung* as it appears in Plato. Rosen then rightly points out that Hegel's claim is stronger than Plato's and that rather than merely transforming *Doxa* into *Sophia*, certainty into truth, or *Vorstellungen* into *Begriffen*, Hegel wishes to demonstrate the necessity of the latter independently, in some sense, from the former. That is, rather than regarding the truth as a substance grounded in an other world, Hegel insists on regarding it as equally grounded in the subject. It is reasonable, then, to call this approach "generative", since it attempts to generate the truth, which is acknowledged to exist also in the phenomenal world, purely subjectively and (at least in some formulations) without any reference to this world. It is also reasonable to conclude that such an attempt to reconcile two independent truths, the one purely subjective and the other objective, is indeed a 'sheer Neo-Platonic fantasy'.<sup>60</sup>

60. Rosen, op. cit, p. 179; p. 119 above.



However, if we allow that the notion of *Entausserung* is as essential to the Phenomenology as *Erinnerung*, then the need to force this dichotomy between subjective and objective approaches falls - or at least is shifted to different ground. By making *Entausserung* essential to phenomenal knowledge, Hegel counterposes to the Platonic transformative approach the idea that Spirit not the substance of a form which it merely copies, but rather makes itself into what it is. On the other hand, in contrast to a Neo-Platonic generative approach, the *Entausserung* of natural consciousness insists that nothing may be known except in so far as it takes an individual or objective form: only so is it present to consciousness.

If it is thus clear at least that Hegel is attempting to avoid the dichotomy which Rosen presents him with, it is not, of course, by that token evident that he succeeds. If Hegel is simply insisting that at every level our approach must be both subjective and objective, is it not perhaps the case that he is simply trying to get the best of both worlds and trying to convince us that this is possible through a dialectical sleight of hand? This brings us back to the second question mentioned above. If the necessity of the Phenomenology is neither purely subjective, ie. logical, nor purely objective, resting on the received idea that the true exists, then what else is left? What is the necessity of the Phenomenology?

To answer this question we must begin by acknowledging that there is a "generative" element in Hegel's thought. This may be observed particularly in Hegel's Logics, in so far as they attempt to demonstrate the necessity of the Absolute without reference to phenomena. However, we must stress that at least in Hegel's earlier system (that is, the Phenomenology followed by the Science of Logic), this generative approach is preceded by an introduction which makes it essential to knowledge that it appears in a phenomenal

form. If we are not mistaken, then this phenomenological introduction to Hegel's system is not something which could be dispensed with, but is absolutely presupposed by the later work.<sup>61</sup> There can be no knowledge which is not in some sense consciousness.

It is true that this view seems to be contradicted by Hegel's well known characterisation of his Science of Logic as

*"the account of God as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of the world and any finite Spirit".* (Science of Logic, p. 60).

However, if this account appears to allow God and Logic to exist in logical and temporal priority over Spirit and nature, their objective forms, we should note that Hegel also argues that they need these objective forms. God, in Hegel's view, is not absolutely independent, like a platonic form, but is both 'Inner and Outer', as he comments in the lesser Logic,<sup>62</sup> and must therefore manifest himself in an external form.

"All that God is, he imparts and reveals" (Lesser Logic, p. 198, §140).

In fact, if God were truly separate from the world, there would be no grounds for describing a purely subjective Logic as His thought. Nevertheless, if this subjective Logic is to be supposed to generate the thought of God from nothing, that is purely subjectively, then it is not clear how this approach can overcome the objection that it is still unclear how purely subjective thought can engender a true content.

61. Phenomenology, p. 21f.

62. Lesser Logic, p. 198, §140.

In the end, it seems to me, it is possible for Hegel to resolve this difficulty only through a panlogistic identification of Logic and God. It is only possible to avoid an oscillation between the substantive and subjective by seeing both as equally moments of the Absolute Idea. The Absolute Idea cannot and is not intended to be explicable in terms of the merely subjective or objective. On the contrary, it is their ground. As such it is divine, and is God. Thus, if we seek to find the necessity of Hegel's system in terms of a rational explanation of the system, which satisfies us completely and makes perfect logical sense, we will be disappointed. From this point of view, Hegel's position is that there is no reason for absolute being, and that is why it is absolute. To this extent, Hegel agrees with Sartre, that in answer to the metaphysical question "why is being?", we must answer that there is no reason and the question is invalid.<sup>63</sup> The world simply is not rational in this formal sense. "The Absolute is no more against reason than it is for it; it is beyond Reason"<sup>64</sup>.

The world, however, makes sense. Sartre accounts for this in terms of the intentional structure of the activity and thought of those who create it; and since they are essentially free, their world is essentially contingent. Hegel, by contrast, does not explain the rationality of the world in terms of the rationality of the subject who perceives and creates it, but in terms of the rationality of the Absolute Idea. The world therefore makes sense and is rational in the quite different sense, that it exhibits God's purpose.

63. Sartre, Being and Nothingness, Methuen 1969, p. 297.

64. Hegel, Faith and Knowledge, trans Cerf & Harris, Albany 1977, p. 56. Here, Hegel appears to share this position with the philosophy of subjectivity of Kant, Jacobi, and Fichte. The argument is often associated with Thomas Aquinas.

We cannot explain it, but in it we can find reason, and this reason is divine. Thus Hegel closes the Philosophy of History, which set out to show Reason to be the cause of history with these words:

"That the History of the World, with all the changing scenes which its annals present, is this process of development and the realization of Spirit - this is the true *Theodicea*,<sup>65</sup> the justification of God in History. Only *this* insight can reconcile Spirit with the History of the World - viz., that what has happened, and is happening every day, is not only not "without God", but is essentially His work". (Philosophy of History, p. 457).

The Phenomenology likewise closes with an image of God in the world:

"Their preservation [of the moments of Spirit], regarded from the side of their free existence appearing in the form of contingency, is History: but regarded from the side of their comprehended organisation, it is the Science of Knowing in the sphere of appearance: the two together, comprehended History, form alike the inwardizing and the Calvary of absolute Spirit, the actuality, truth, and certainty of his throne, without which he would be lifeless and lone. Only

from the chalice of this realm of Spirits  
foams forth for Him his own infinitude" (Phenomenology, p. 493)<sup>66</sup>

In a certain sense, then Hegel's philosophy is ultimately mystical. That is, insofar as it holds the Absolute to be absolute, and therefore beyond explanation in terms of formal reason, it makes into something which is mysterious to that reason. The Phenomenology cannot give any reason for Spirit taking the form it does, other than that it is a manifestation of the Absolute Idea. Nevertheless, because Spirit is a manifestation of the

65. Theodicy: the attempt, often associated with Leibniz, to reconcile the notion of a good God with a world which contains evil, which was satirised by Voltaire in Candide.

66. The quotation from Schiller is amended. Kojève, op.cit, p. 166 discusses the significance of the alteration. The most important change is that "Seele" (soul) in Schiller's verse is replaced by "Geist", (Spirit) in Hegel's rendering. No pun appears to be intended by Hegel, but, as Jung has pointed out, the german word *Geist* "probably has to do with something foaming, effervescing, or fermenting; hence affinities with *Gischt* (foam); *Gäsch* (yeast), ghost..." (The Collected Works of C.G.Jung, Vol 9(i), Routledge 1959, p.209).

Absolute Idea, it must be possible to demonstrate its relationship to the Absolute Idea as a relationship of necessity. The Absolute Idea, in other words, is a result of the Phenomenology only because it is a presupposition. Its necessity, ultimately, is Divine, as, ultimately, is Reason itself. In so far as consciousness is free to acknowledge or to deny the existence of the Divine,<sup>67</sup> I suppose that it is appropriate that the reader should judge for himself the ultimate worth of this viewpoint.

67. See p. 70 above.



PART TWO

SUBJECTIVE SPIRIT

So far we have considered the general aim and the structure of the Phenomenology. If these are its final and formal causes, there then remain according to Aristotle's theory of causality its material and efficient causes to be accounted for. If the Phenomenology is an edifice, we have accounted for its proposed use and its architecture, and we have still to consider its builder and his bricks.<sup>1</sup> To account for the builder would be to show what in Hegel's life and personality led him to write a Phenomenology - unless there are other factors which efficiently cause the Phenomenology.<sup>2</sup> This would certainly be necessary for a proper account of the Phenomenology. It is by no means incompatible in Hegelian terms that the Phenomenology should be both true, and yet not impersonal but essentially the produce of an individual.<sup>3</sup> However,

1. This analogy is also used by Kojève op. cit. p.32. Hegel himself sometimes consciously used Aristotle's scheme. (See G.D.O'Brien Hegel on Reason and History, University of Chicago Press 1975, p. 45 and below, Ch.5, p.204.
2. It is possible, for example, to view the Phenomenology as a product not so much of Hegel's as of Hegel's times. This 'sociology of knowledge' approach can be found especially in Lukács, who in his own estimation knows not only what Hegel thought but also what in the circumstances it was possible for him to think, as if thought were not infinite. (Lukács, op. cit.).
3. This conception of truth may be seen, for example, in the New Testament. The Gospel truth consists in four different accounts by four individual men; while earlier scriptures were directly communicated by God.

such an account is beyond the scope of this work.<sup>4</sup> In Parts Two and Three below we will consider only some of the bricks of the Phenomenology, fitting them as far as possible into Hegel's purpose and design.

In Part 1 above it was argued that the Phenomenology adapts the classical theory of forms in order to include the notion that, as Hegel put it in the Berlin Aesthetics, "... appearance itself is essential to essence" (Introduction to Aesthetics, ed. Karelis, Trans. Knox, Oxford, 1979, p.8) This, we said, involved him in replacing the classical doctrine of the harmony of the whole with his own more modern view of the necessity of the whole. The Phenomenology is concerned especially with this necessity; but this must be understood as a modification not a rejection of the classical view. Hegel presupposes that "we" somehow grasp the harmony of the whole and sets out only to demonstrate this as a necessity to natural consciousness. The aspect of harmony which is presupposed is thus

4. For those interested in Hegel's personality, I include the following details from his natal horoscope, cast at noon, since I do not know the precise time of his birth, and using the placidian system of houses. The ascendant is ♈ 24°31' at ♈ 27°19', ♎ at ♎ 00°50', and ♋ at ♋ 14°36' are all in the 1<sup>st</sup> house. ♎ is retrograde at ♎ 16°25' in the 2<sup>nd</sup> house. ♏, which is retrograde at ♏ 16°37' is in the 6<sup>th</sup> house. ♊ at ♊ 08°27' is in the 7<sup>th</sup> house. ♋ at ♋ 10°35', ♏ at ♏ 04°09', and ♎ at ♎ 10°14', are all in the 9<sup>th</sup> house (which governs wisdom). ♎ at ♎ 13°56' and ♏ at ♏ 13°02' are both in the 10<sup>th</sup> house. The M.C. is ♎ 13°55'.

While we are on the subject of astrology, we may note that the twelve major subdivisions of subjective and objective Spirit correspond to the twelve signs of the Zodiac - though since there is no indication that Hegel was aware of this connection it would be out of place to follow it further here. The correspondence would be: ♈ to Sense-certainty, ♏ to Perception, ♊ to Understanding, ♎ to Desire, ♋ to Self-consciousness, ♎ to free Self-consciousness. ♏ to Observing Reason, ♈ to the actualisation of Reason, especially Pleasure, ♎ to real individuality, ♋ to *Sittlichkeit*, ♏ to Culture, ♊ to Morality, and finally the Zodiac as a whole to Religion as the atonement of all the previous moments of Spirit.

easily forgotten or lost in the demonstration of its necessity. In order to counteract this I will follow here the procedure Hegel adopts in the Philosophy of Mind, but not in the Phenomenology, and precede the discussion of the experience of natural consciousness of each moment of subjective Spirit with a brief discussion of how that moment of Spirit appears 'for us' or in the aspect of its harmony with the whole of Spirit. We will begin, therefore, not with sense-certainty, but with consciousness in general.

## CHAPTER FOUR : CONSCIOUSNESS

## (a) Consciousness in General

Hegel's use of the term consciousness may appear confusing. In particular, he appears to use the term in two different senses. On the one hand consciousness is a limited attitude, only one moment of Spirit; and this attitude, which is the attitude of natural consciousness, is described in the chapter on Consciousness. On the other hand it is a much broader attitude, the attitude of phenomenal knowledge which characterises the whole Phenomenology and includes all the moments of Spirit. However, both of these attitudes are aspects of consciousness, and in so far as we consider consciousness in general there is no need to distinguish them. Phenomenal knowledge is consciousness, and as we will see it conforms precisely to the pattern described in the chapter on consciousness. The object of phenomenal knowledge always has precisely the characteristics of an object of consciousness. All knowledge must be knowledge of some thing.

On the other hand, if Hegel's use of the term consciousness is in this respect precise, we should note also that he is sometimes less precise in distinguishing consciousness from Understanding. In the Phenomenology Understanding is only one dimension of consciousness, which also includes the moments of sensation and perception. However, elsewhere, and to an extent also in the Preface to the Phenomenology, Hegel uses the term Understanding to mean consciousness in general. When he uses the term Understanding in this sense, it carries more or less the same meaning as it does in Kant's distinction between Reason and Understanding. In citing comments Hegel makes about Understanding in this discussion of



consciousness in general, the assumption is made that Hegel's comment either is intended to apply generally to consciousness, or in the few cases where this is not Hegel's direct intention in the context, that it may be taken also to apply generally.

Consciousness for Hegel is a relation of the simple Ego to an external world. The Ego is essentially part of it. We say "I am conscious", not "there is consciousness". The Ego of consciousness, however, is not conscious of itself. This in turn means that consciousness is unable to take up the self conscious attitude to the world which Hegel calls Reason. This does not mean that the Ego of consciousness is passive. On the contrary, the whole experience of consciousness is guided by consciousness' preoccupation with the question of who is the active partner in the relationship of Ego to Object, or in Hegelian language, of which moment is essential. Rather, what is implied is that the Ego is uncritical. Consciousness is exhausted in the relationship of Ego to Object, and this means that anything which involves a relationship of the Ego to itself is barred from consciousness. The Ego of consciousness is empty, without possessions, and therefore the tools of criticism, such as interest, opinion, judgement, and so on, are all absent from consciousness.<sup>1</sup>

1. Freud's work - which fairly consistently takes up the standpoint of consciousness, exhibits clearly this absence of criticism. For example, Freud quotes approvingly the French proverb "*tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner*" - to understand is to forgive. Forgiveness, however, is not quite what is meant, for to understand is to be aware without judgement. We should rather say that understanding simply refrains from having an opinion in the matter, indeed, denies itself the right to any opinion, seeking instead - as some social scientists would put it - to be "value-free". This attitude cannot be said to forgive, for it has not yet risen to the notion of ethical judgement.

This may be seen in the distinction between consciousness and empiricism<sup>2</sup>. Consciousness is in a sense empiricist, and empiricism, like consciousness and in Hegel's view rightly, limits itself to knowledge of what exists.<sup>3</sup> Empiricism, however, does not by any means refrain from judgement, and on the contrary, it knows only what it judges to be worth knowing, and it holds its interests to be essentially part of its knowledge. This may be expressed by saying that empiricism knows facts (*Sache*)<sup>4</sup>, while Consciousness knows only things. A fact is something which I choose to be interested in, which I hold to have a certain value or relevance, while a thing is simply there, and my own estimation of it is irrelevant. Empiricism is in this sense an attitude of Reason which, as we saw earlier<sup>5</sup> is a relationship of self-consciousness to an object, rather than an attitude of consciousness. Consciousness is essentially a relation of the Ego to an object, and this means that it is not free from the object. Empiricism, by contrast, involves a dimension of freedom.

"it is right to notice the valuable principle of freedom involved in Empiricism. For the main lesson of Empiricism is that man must see for himself and feel that he is present in every fact of knowledge which he has to accept". (Lesser Logic p. 61 §38)

2. In Natural Law (p. 58; see also Hyppolite op. cit. p. 103) Hegel distinguishes the Empiricism of the man of action from the Empiricism of Understanding. The Empiricism meant here is true or rational empiricism (see below, Ch 6 p. 50ff). In the discussion of the notion of 'analysis' referred to later in this section the Empiricism Hegel refers to is the one-sided Empiricism of understanding.
3. Lesser Logic, p. 61 §38 cf also Philosophy of Mind, p. 162 §420 (Empiricism knows that "everything must be experienced").
4. Phenomenology, p. 237ff
5. P. 58 above.

Hegel will go on to argue that in truth all consciousness is in fact self-consciousness, and that it can be defined as a relation simply of Ego to Object only by abstracting it from Spirit as a whole, and viewing it in an analytical isolation which, as he will show, cannot correspond to a real isolation of consciousness as a discrete entity. Nevertheless, Hegel judges that one of the major problems for modern philosophy, which did not exist for ancient thought, is that philosophy adopts the standpoint of consciousness only, and accepts in particular its compartmentalisation of thought into discrete and fixed things. 6

"The manner of study in ancient times differed from that of the modern age in that the former was the proper and complete formation of the natural consciousness. Putting itself to the test at every

6. Most commentators have noted that in the section on Consciousness Hegel draws especially heavily on ancient dialectic. Hyppolite writes "Without exaggerating, as Purpus, does, the specificity of all the allusions to Greek philosophy in this chapter, we cannot but notice similarities between this first dialectic of the Phenomenology and that of such ancient Greek philosophers as Parmenides and Zeno - and, especially, Plato". (Op.cit. p. 83). Gadamer goes so far as to say that Hegel "is the first truly to grasp the depth of Platonic - dialectic. He is the discoverer of the truly speculative platonic dialogues, the "Sophist", "Parmenides" and "Philebus", which did not even exist for eighteenth century philosophy and which only because of him were recognised as the real core of Plato's philosophy in the following period. (Gadamer, Hegel's Dialectic, Yale University Press 1976 p.7). Glockner comments that "Future monographs will show how Hegel, in the years from 1802-1815 worked innumerable passages from Plato and Aristotle, partly in literal translations, into his philosophy", and Kaufmann (op. cit. p.118) comments that this is especially true of "Consciousness" in the Phenomenology. However, Hegel does not acknowledge his debt to classical thought in this chapter, and we may conclude that if he is not being deliberately obscure, he does not think that the reference to classical thought is especially important for understanding his argument. His attitude to classical thought, as it expressed in the passage quoted directly after this note, shows that he takes a knowledge of classical thought for granted, and that what is important for him is the way in which he has added to that body of thought, and reinterpreted it to serve a modern purpose. Taking for granted the classical notion of perfection or harmony, Hegel sets out to supplement this notion with a demonstration of its necessity. For this reason, in what follows, if we acknowledge some of the classical sources of Hegel's argument, we will be careful also to treat Hegel's argument as it is presented in its own right, and not to reduce it to a simple restatement of classical ideas which does not fundamentally alter them.

point of its existence and philosophising about everything it came across, it made itself into a universality that was active through and through. In modern times, however, the individual finds the abstract form ready-made; the effort to grasp and appropriate it is more the direct driving force of what is within and the truncated generation of the universal than it is the emergence of the latter from the concrete variety of existence. Hence the task nowadays consists not so much in purging the individual of an immediate, sensuous mode of apprehension, and making him into a substance that is an object of thought and thinks, but rather in just the opposite, 'in freeing determinate thoughts from their fixity so as to give actuality to the universal, and impart to it spiritual life". (Phenomenology, p.19)

The task of ancient philosophy, in other words, was to replace *doxa* with a consciousness of the forms, or of what Hegel here calls "universality". The problem for Hegel is that consciousness of the universal is not enough, for in consciousness the universal appears as fixed and finite.<sup>7</sup> It is necessary to show how this standpoint can and must be transcended towards the more fluid, living, infinite standpoint of Spirit.<sup>8</sup>

7. Hegel accuses Kant, Jacobi and Fichte of making the finite absolute in Faith and Knowledge (eg p.60). There he characterises their attitude in general as one of subjectivity, but the meaning of "subjectivity" in that early essay is very close to the meaning of "consciousness" in Hegel's later thought. In the History of Philosophy, however, Hegel characterises virtually all philosophy since Descartes as the philosophy of thinking understanding; but excludes Kant, and subsequent German thinkers, who now play the role of bringing back the objectivity to the subjectivity of modern thought. (eg. History of Philosophy, Vol.3 London, 1896, p. 408).
8. Cf. lesser Logic, p.53 §32.

The attitude of consciousness is essentially lifeless - and we will see that it is through confronting it with the notion of life that Hegel finally demonstrates that it must abandon its position. Hegel criticises this lifelessness in the Preface to the Phenomenology in connection with Fichte's "Sun-Clear Report to the Public about the True Essence of the Newest Philosophy":

"What results from this method of labelling all that is in heaven and earth with the few determinations of the general schema, and pigeon-holing everything in this way, is nothing less than a 'report clear as noonday' on the universe as an organism, viz. a synoptic table like a skeleton with scraps of paper stuck all over it, or like the rows of closed and labelled boxes in a grocer's stall. It is as easy to read off as either of these; and just as all the flesh and blood has been stripped from this skeleton, and the no longer living 'essence' [*Sache*] has been packed away in the boxes, so in the report the living essence of the matter [*Wesen der Sache*] has been stripped away or boxed up dead". (Phenomenology, p. 31).

In the lesser Logic Hegel connects this attitude to the analytical approach of the empirical natural scientist, whose attitude to nature, like that of consciousness, claims to be entirely disinterested. It divides everything, separating it into parts, and although it is true that "Spirit itself is an inherent division", we must not forget that "this is only one half of the process, and that the main point is the reunion of what has been parted".<sup>9</sup> Hegel goes on to quote a well known passage from Goethe's Faust.

Mocking the *Collegium Logicum*, Mephistopheles says:

9. Lesser Logic, p. 63, §38 Zn.

"*Encheiresin Naturae nennt's die Chemie  
 Spottet ihrer selbst, and weiss nicht, wie:  
 Hat die Theile in ihren Hand,  
 Fehlt leider nur das geistige Band*"  
 (Lesser Logic, p. 63 §38) 10

Consciousness, in so far as its awareness of things is analytical,<sup>11</sup> is a deathly attitude.

"... it labours under a delusion if it supposes that while analysing the objects, it leaves them as they were: it really transforms the concrete into an abstract. And, as a consequence, the living thing is killed: life can exist only in the concrete and one". (ibid).

Kojève puts it more bluntly.

"The conceptual understanding of empirical reality is equivalent to a *murder*" (Kojève, op. cit. p. 140).

10. This may be translated, very roughly and without any attempt at versification, as follows:

'Chemistry calls it Natures Laboratory;  
 It mocks itself, without knowing how:  
 It has all the parts in its hand,  
 All that's missing is the spiritual bond.'

Since Faust appeared after the Phenomenology in 1808 there has apparently been some speculation that the passage cited from the Preface influenced Goethe: but this is not only unlikely but also, as Kaufmann points out, impossible, since the lines in question appear in more or less the same form and context in Goethe's Urfaust of 1775, and if there is any influence it is of Goethe upon Hegel. See Kaufmann op. cit. p. 433. Wallace, in his notes to his translation of the Logic, compares the passage cited to the following passage from Goethe's Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre, iii, 3: where it is remarked in connection with some anatomical exercises: "You will learn ere long that building up is more instructive than tearing down, combining more than separating, animating the dead rather than killing what was killed already. ... Combining means more than separating: re-constructing more than onlooking". (Lesser Logic, p. 309. Wallace also gives an alternative translation of the lines from Faust). Hegel's quotation from Faust is, incidentally, inaccurate. As is usually the case, Hegel appears to be quoting from memory. The original lines may be found at l.1938 of Faust.

11. This is more strictly the attitude of perception only.



However, if Hegel maintains this romantic distaste for the analytical attitude of 'disinterested' science, it is nevertheless also the case that, as we have seen, he characterises the first three moments of the Phenomenology as an analysis of Spirit into its parts.<sup>12</sup> Analysis is objectionable only if it is taken in isolation, but it is nevertheless essential to phenomenal knowledge; and since the Phenomenology is written from the standpoint of consciousness, it is appropriate that it too should analyse its experience. In the Preface to the Phenomenology Hegel comments that

"The *analysis* of the idea, as it used to be carried out, was, in fact, nothing else than ridding it of the form in which it had become familiar. To break up an idea into its original elements is to return to its moments, which at least do not have the form of the given idea, but rather constitute the immediate property of the self. This analysis, to be sure, arrives only at *thoughts* which are themselves familiar, fixed, and inert determinations. But what is thus *separated* and non-actual is an essential moment: for it is only because the concrete does divide itself, and make itself into something non-actual, that it is self-moving. The activity of dissolution is the power and work of the *Understanding*, the most astonishing and mightiest of powers, or rather the absolute power." (Phenomenology, p.18) 13

The attitude of consciousness, then, is both an attitude which Hegel wants especially to criticise for its lifeless formalism, and yet at the same time an attitude which is essential to knowledge, without which knowledge has no power, and which is therefore appropriately the attitude of the entire Phenomenology,<sup>14</sup>

What is crucial then, and what Hegel sets out to demonstrate in the section on Consciousness, is that consciousness is essential to Spirit, and vice-versa. He does not do this directly, as a platonic dialogue

12. Phenomenology, p. 264; above p. 56 ff

13. As in the lesser Logic, Hegel here proceeds from the notion of analysis directly to the notion of Death.

14. cf lesser Logic p. 114 §80.

might do, for example, by asking whether or not consciousness may be conceived of as an entity which is independent of Spirit as a whole.<sup>15</sup> It is presupposed, or at least hoped, that we already understand that consciousness cannot be so understood. Instead, Hegel sets out to demonstrate the necessity of moving not to Spirit, but only to self-consciousness. His conclusion is that

"not only is consciousness of a thing possible only for a self-consciousness, but also that self-consciousness alone is the truth of those shapes" (Phenomenology, p. 102)

This then refers to self-consciousness, and the Ego may then be developed into the independent or free being which is the subject of Reason. Only then, having demonstrated the necessary connection of the moments of subjective Spirit to each other does he go on to consider Spirit itself as a whole and as the ground of these parts.

15. An entertaining version of this approach can be found in David Lindsay's novel Voyage to Arcturus. Though Lindsay apparently had not read Hegel (though he did know and admire Nietzsche and Schopenhauer), the first half of this novel reads quite neatly as a translation of the Phenomenology of subjective Spirit into fictional form, though it loses intrinsically precisely the *differentia specifica* of Hegel's phenomenology, that is, its notion of necessity. The latter half of the novel does not follow Hegel's line of argument. Lindsay's account is individualistic, and moves hastily from the subjective soul to religious concerns which could be associated with absolute Spirit; but objective spirit is more or less absent from his account.

## (b) Sense-Certainty

The little chapter on sense-certainty should be taken as an initiation ceremony, and, as we will see, there is a certain sense in which because of this it differs from the argument of the rest of the Phenomenology. Nevertheless, it is certainly a "good first lesson in dialectic",<sup>16</sup> and it will be worth examining it in some detail here. It is directed against two distinct non-philosophical positions, which correspond to the respective tasks of ancient and modern philosophy which Hegel distinguished in the Preface.<sup>17</sup> The first of these is the position of the naive soul which has not yet learned the meaning of philosophical thought, and the second is the contemporary philosophy of common sense, which is not naive but which claims the certainty of the senses alone to have the status of truth.

In so far as it pursues the first aim, it is very similar to the early platonic dialogues, and in a sense is the most platonic passage in the entire Phenomenology. It is intended to liberate consciousness from the most stubborn and simple form of *doxa* or certainty, the certainty of the senses. As such it gives the impression of being more of a ritual than a real engagement, perhaps because Hegel finds it hard to take seriously the idea that this should still be necessary. Appropriately, then, he closes the argument with a reference to the Eleusinian Mysteries, which Plato had also used as a symbol of philosophical initiation.<sup>18</sup>

16. G. Mure, The Philosophy of Hegel, OUP 1965, p. 65.

17. Phenomenology, p. 19; p. 138f above.

18. Eg. Plato, *Meno*, in Protagoras and Meno, Penguin 1956, p. 123.

In pursuing the second aim Sense-Certainty is more distinctly Hegelian, in so far as it is directed against the rigidity of understanding rather than the less tutored solidity of *doxa*. Hegel seems to have in mind particularly Krug, who succeeded to Kant's chair at Konigsburg, and whom Hegel had criticised at length in an article in the Critical Journal.<sup>19</sup> Krug was well known in his day as a leading exponent of the "philosophy of common sense". He is virtually unknown now. A similar figure familiar to English speaking readers today might be Bertrand Russell, and Richard Norman explicitly uses Hegel's argument here in order to criticise Russell.<sup>20</sup>

Hegel, unlike Scholasticus, plunges straight into his argument, opening the chapter with the following words:

"The knowledge which is at the start or is immediately our knowledge can be nothing other than immediate knowledge itself, knowledge of the immediate or of what simply is". (Phenomenology, p. 58).

Exactly what this immediate knowledge is, however, and why we should have to begin with it, is not immediately clear, and has been the object of some speculation.<sup>21</sup>

If we consider the parallel passage in the Philosophy of Mind, titled Sensuous Consciousness, the position seems fairly clear. Consciousness emerges from the unconscious of 'sleeping' soul of anthropology, and its most general characteristic is sensuous awareness.

19. Hegel, Werke, FMVH, Vol. 4, pp. 174-188.

20. Norman, op. cit. p. 36ff.

21. Eg, Norman, op.cit. p. 29, Hyppolite op. cit. p. 84.

"Sense-consciousness therefore is aware of the object as an existent, a something, an existing thing, a singular, and so on. It appears as wealthiest in matter, but as poorest in thought. That wealth of matter is made out of sensations: they are the *material* of consciousness, the substantial and qualitative, what the soul in its anthropological sphere *is* and finds *in itself*. (Philosophy of Mind, p. 159 §418)

Sense consciousness, therefore, is not so much a single starting point, as the most general characteristic of all consciousness. Here, as in the Logic, Hegel begins with the most abstract and general determinations, and proceeds towards the concrete and specific. Sense consciousness in the Phenomenology is by no means left behind at the end of the chapter. On the contrary, as Hyppolite has pointed out,<sup>22</sup> sense consciousness appears as a moment even of absolute knowledge in the closing pages of the book.

"For the self-knowing Spirit, just because it grasps its Notion, is the immediate identity with itself which, in its difference, is the certainty of immediacy or sense-consciousness - the beginning from which we started. This release of itself from the form of its Self is the supreme freedom and assurance of its self-knowledge". (Phenomenology, p. 491)

Sense-consciousness, then is the starting point in virtue of being the most abstract determination of consciousness, and equally its most general characteristic. All consciousness is sensation.

However, as Hegel himself goes on to point out in the Philosophy of Spirit, sense-consciousness is not quite the same thing as sense-certainty, which latter concept appears only in the Phenomenology. Sense-certainty involves intuition which is absent from sense-consciousness.

22. Hyppolite, op. cit. p.85.

"Spatial and temporal singularness, here and now (the terms by which in the Phenomenology of Spirit I described the object of sense-consciousness) strictly belong to *intuition*. At present the object is at first to be viewed only in its correlation to *consciousness*, i.e. as something *external* to it, and not yet as external on its own part, or as being beside and not of itself". (Philosophy of Mind, p. 159, §418) 23

Sense-consciousness in other words is a description of a state of consciousness. As Hegel points out later in the Philosophy of Mind it is only once we get to the level of perception that consciousness is capable of experience.<sup>24</sup> For this reason, in so far as sense-certainty is sense-consciousness, it is outside of the phenomenological development, since it has no experience. Sense-certainty, however, includes a dimension absent from sense consciousness. It involves a claim that it is true, which it expresses by saying not that it is conscious of its senses, but that it is certain of them. In so far as it is thus subjectively involved in its senses it is what Hegel calls intuition. It is in this sense also that natural consciousness is not simply passive, but always sceptical, and without this sceptical attitude the experience which is traced and recollected in the Phenomenology (and which is absent from the Philosophy of Mind .) would not be possible.

23. In the Propaedeutic, however, Hegel does not make this distinction, and presents sense consciousness in terms of a dialectic of Here and Now. Even Hegel is capable of being inconsistent.
24. Philosophy of Mind ., p. 161, §420. Hegel mentions the notion of experience have only in passing and does not make it in any way central to his analysis as he does in the Phenomenology.



To begin with, however, sense-certainty takes itself to be sense-consciousness, and denies that it involves any intuition. We, in so far as we have phenomenal knowledge, know that it is necessarily intuition, and the problem is to demonstrate this to natural consciousness. Hegel expresses this in the title to the section through a pun on the German word "*meinen*", which can be both the dative case of *mein*, meaning the possessive "mine", and "to think", or "to mean", or "to intend" - in a word, to intuit.<sup>25</sup> The suggestion to us, then, is that what sense-certainty takes to be purely private, its own personal consciousness, in fact just the opposite, something which is intended or thought and which therefore refers to a system of meanings which are universal and public. The ritual of sense-certainty initiates it into recognition of this fact.

25. Later, in the chapter on Reason, Hegel makes a complementary pun on the double meaning of "*Sein*" and "*sein*", the capitalised form meaning 'being', and the non-capitalised form being the third person possessive, his, hers, or its. In the opening sections of Reason, then, we find the opposite movement to that of sense-certainty. Observing reason makes *Sein sein*, that is makes objective being its own property (Phenomenology p. 145). On *mein* and *meinen*, we may compare also a comment Hegel makes in the History of Philosophy and elsewhere, that the expression "I think" (*Ich meine*) is a pleonasm: "Who, after all, can do your thinking for you?" (From Shklar, op. cit. p. 3).

Hegel confronts sense-certainty in three stages, setting a pattern which is repeated often and at many levels in the Phenomenology. In the first stage, the object is taken to be essential, and the apprehending subject to be inessential; so that the object exists and is the same whether or not it is apprehended, and the apprehension is a passive reflection which alters nothing. Hyppolite relates this stage to the "being" of an object which Parmenides opposed to our "opinion" of it.<sup>26</sup> In the second stage, this is reversed, and the observer becomes the essential moment. That is to say, the observation becomes essentially subjective, and the object exists only in being perceived. This echoes Berkeley's "*esse est percipi*";<sup>27</sup> and parallels may also be found in Plato's Protagoras and Theaetetus. Finally, the process is regarded as a whole, so that neither subject nor object alone, but their relationship is taken to be essential.

This threefold division, as Hegel explains in the Propadeutic,<sup>28</sup> is a general characteristic of consciousness. As we saw earlier, the three moments of subjective Spirit, in so far as they appear to consciousness or as phenomenology, are also defined in terms of these three ways of looking at the relation of subject to object. We may also note that this division is also echoed in Hegel's general characterisation of Logic.

"With regard to its form, *logic* has three aspects: (a) the *abstract* or *understandable* aspect; (b) the *dialectical* or *negatively rational* aspect; (c) the *speculative* or *positively rational* aspect" (Logic, p. 113).

26. Hyppolite op. cit. p. 88ff. Giovanni della Volpe in Logic as a Positive Science, NLB 1969, p. 41, also makes this connection.

27. Berkeley, The Principles of Human Knowledge, ed. G.J. Warnock, Collins/Fontana 1962, p.66.

28. Propadeutic, in J.Lowenberg ed. Hegel Selections, New York 1929, pp. 68-79: p. 69f especially.

We should, as most commentators have pointed out, be extremely wary of attempting to fit Hegel's views into any abstract logical scheme.<sup>29</sup>

Hegel himself criticises this view in the Preface to the Phenomenology:

"Of course, the *triadic form* must not be regarded as scientific when it is reduced to a lifeless schema, a mere shadow, and when scientific organisation is degraded into a table of terms. Kant rediscovered this triadic form by instinct, but in his work it was lifeless and uncomprehended ..." (Phenomenology, p. 29).

We should not, however, go so far as to argue that Hegel entirely rejects the idea of a formal structure.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, he completes the last sentence of the above quote as follows:

"... since then it has, however, been raised to its absolute significance, and with it the true form in its true content has been presented, so that the Notion of Science has emerged" (ibid).

While we should not attempt to fit an abstract scheme onto Hegel's arguments, where in any case it will often fail to fit, we should not assume that it has no formal structure. In the Phenomenology, we may say, Spirit is presented to consciousness, and it follows that distinctions which are characteristic of consciousness and of the object of consciousness will therefore also be made in Spirit in so far as it is an object for consciousness. Accordingly, we will follow these three aspects in the dialectic of sense-certainty separately.

29. This view has been especially associated with the British Hegelian J.M.E.M. McTaggart (Studies in the Hegelian Dialectic, CUP, 1896) See also Michael Kosok's article on 'The Formalisation of Hegel's Dialectical Logic' in A.MacIntyre (ed.), Hegel, Notre Dame Press 1976.

30. Kaufmann, op. cit. p.168 appears to take this view.

To begin with, then, sense-certainty has for its object a particular sense impression. This object for it

"is the essence. It is regardless of whether it is known or not; and remains even if it is not known, whereas there is no knowledge if the object is not there. (Phenomenology, p.59).

It claims to know this object directly and immediately, as "This", "Here", and "Now" - taking these terms to express the absolute singularity of its object. In order to test the Truth of this claim - in its own terms, of course - Hegel says "a simple experiment will suffice". We ask sense-certainty to write down its truth: "a truth cannot loose anything by being written down". Let it write, for example, "Now is Night". "If now, this noon, we look again at the written truth we shall have to say that it has become stale". The same procedure may be applied to the "here". That which is 'here' is only here so long as 'here' is where I am looking. I have only to turn around for here to become somewhere else, and to say that what is true is what is here is only to say that everything is true, since everything is here, and this means equally that nothing (in particular) is true.<sup>31</sup>

Through this experience sense certainty discovers that what it took to be the most concrete particular, "This", "Here" and "Now", is in fact the exact opposite, the most abstract universal, since everything sense certainty sees is "This", "Here", and "Now". What sense-certainty "meant" was something uniquely particular, but what it said was the exact opposite, the emptiest universal, and what it means is in fact quite ineffable.

31. All passages in quotation marks in this paragraph come from Phenomenology, p. 59f.

Thus it discovers that language "has the divine nature of directly reversing the meaning of what is said".<sup>32</sup> This experience is the first 'determinate negation' of the Phenomenology, and also the most simple and lucid, and should be considered carefully by those who are uncertain or critical of the notion of determinate negation.

The recognition that the truth of the object is universal is equally a reference back to the subject. It is now not the object which is simply meant, but the subjective Here and Now which is taken to be true. The original relationship of subject to object, therefore, has been reversed:

"certainty is now to be found in the opposite element, viz in knowing, which previously was the unessential element. Its truth is in the object as *my* object, or in its being *mine* [Meinen]; it is, because *I* know it". (Phenomenology, p. 61).

Hegel effectively applies the same argument to this as to the previous position. 'I' hold this to be true, another 'I' holds another 'this' to be true, and so on, so that "each truth vanishes in the other". The only thing which does not vanish is the universal 'I'. Sense certainty thus learns that what it took to be absolutely singular this time, that is, itself, turns out to be universal, and to be essentially present in any example of consciousness.

At this point Hegel pauses to make a critical allusion to Krug, of whom

32. Phenomenology, p.66. Hegel gives language a similarly exalted position in his discussion of Conscience later in the Phenomenology. Language is the medium of the reconciliation of universal and particular self, of evil and forgiveness (See Hyppolite op. cit. p. 510 ff). In the System der Sittlichkeit Hegel calls language "both the instrument and the offspring of intelligence". (ibid).

he had written in the Critical Journal that he "could not refrain from understanding the thing [i.e. Critical philosophy] like the commonest plebs".<sup>33</sup> Krug had responded to the Cartesian notion that the world could be deduced from reason alone by challenging it to deduce any particular thing, such as for example the pen he was writing with. The challenge became known simply as "Krug's pen", and Hegel alludes to it directly in the Philosophy of Nature,<sup>34</sup> and though he does not mention Krug by name here his allusion is, as commentators agree, clear enough. His response is to say that Krug ought to say which particular thing he *means* us to deduce, but, because of the "divine nature of language" he cannot do this, and can only utter the universal concepts "this" and "thing".<sup>35</sup>

"When Science is faced with the demand - as if it were an acid test it could not pass - that it should construct, deduce, find *a priori*, or however it is put, something called "this thing" or "this one man" it is reasonable that the demand should *say* which "this thing" or which "this particular man" is *meant*; but it is impossible to say this". (Phenomenology, p. 62)

Having learned that both the Here and Now and the I which I mean do not have a continuing being, or "*are not*", "we reach the stage where we have to posit the whole of sense-certainty itself as essence, and no longer one of its moments". Sense certainty thus takes itself to be a "pure act of intuiting", taking the immediate relationship between itself

33. Werke, FMVH, Vol 4, p.178.

34. Philosophy of Nature, §250.

35. We may compare this to a story told of Bertrand Russell and reported by Richard Norman. Russell was asked after a lecture how he could maintain that a sensation could be true when even in the time it took to describe it the sensation it could pass away and be replaced by another. He replied that to avoid this difficulty it is necessary to speak very fast.



and its object to be true. In doing so it becomes very like the sense-consciousness of the Philosophy of Mind. That is to say, it abandons public claims to truth and retreats into silence, seeking certainty only privately in pure intuition. Since it will not speak to us, Hegel proposes that we identify ourselves with it, and ask ourselves whether we can find truth in this pure intuition.

The result is more or less the same as before. We may in our silence 'point to' the particular truth we intend. If we point to something 'now', this particular now ceases to be in the act of pointing to it. It becomes a now that has been.

"But what essentially *has been* [*gewesen ist*] is not in fact an essence that *is* [*kein Wesen*]; *it is not*, and it was with *being* that we were concerned" (Phenomenology, p. 63).

Even in our purely private intuition, therefore, the 'now' is universal. Hegel makes the same argument concerning the 'here'. We conclude that the object exists in time and in space, and this just means that it is not present to us immediately, but on the contrary is mediated through what Kant called the "forms of intuition" of time and space. Mediation, as Hegel argues in the Preface, presents the object not as simple being, which is what is meant by sense-certainty, but as a "becoming",<sup>36</sup> that is as essentially temporal and spatial (though Hegel tends perhaps to stress the former over the latter).<sup>37</sup>

36. Phenomenology, p. 11.

37. Cf Kojève, op. cit, Ch 5; and Phenomenology, p. 487.

This recognition that what is true is universal in the widest sense, i.e. in the sense that it is mediation, produces in Hegel's view the distinct and new attitude of Perception. Perception, Hegel says punning on the meaning of the German term for perception, '*Wahrnehmen*', takes the object as it is in truth, that is as essentially universal. The truth of an object then is to be found not in the immediate intuition of it but in the universal predicates or 'properties' which may be assigned to it. Perception therefore appears as the second distinct moment of consciousness, and as the result of the experience of sense-certainty.

Before he goes on to Perception, Hegel registers openly the contempt for sense-certainty and the philosophy of common sense which has been fairly apparent all along in his cursory treatment of it. Appealing to experience in general, that is to "us" rather than to sense-certainty itself, he says

"we can tell those who assert the truth and certainty of the reality of sense objects that they should go back to the most elementary school of wisdom, viz. the ancient Eleusinian mysteries of Ceres and Bacchus, 38 and that they still have to learn the secret meaning of the eating of bread and the drinking of wine". (*Phenomenology*, p. 65).

This secret meaning apparently lies in that by consuming an object I show that its apparent independence is illusory, and demonstrate my power over it and independence of it by destroying it.<sup>39</sup> Hegel goes on to explain

38. In connection with which Hegel asserted later that "it is as unhistorical as it is foolish to assume that profound truths are to be found there". (*Philosophy of History*, p. 247). Cf. also Gore Vidal, *Julian*, for a novelist's view of the Eleusinian mysteries.

39. Cf. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, op. cit. p.8.

"For he who is initiated into these mysteries not only comes to doubt the being of sensuous things, but to despair of it; in part he brings about the nothingness of such things himself in his dealings with them, and in part he sees them reduce themselves to nothingness. Even the animals are not shut out from this wisdom, but, on the contrary, show themselves to be most profoundly initiated into it; for they do not stand idly in front of sensuous things as if these possessed intrinsic being, but, despairing of their reality and completely assured of their nothingness, they fall to without ceremony and eat them up. And all Nature, like the animals, celebrates these open Mysteries which teach the truth about sensuous things". (ibid).

With sense-certainty thus roundly dismissed, Hegel moves on to Perception.

## (c) Perception

Although the experience of perception is reasonably straightforward, the attitude of perception in general is harder to pin down. This is partly due to a confusion of terminology, which may also be aggravated by ambiguity in translation of *Verstand*.<sup>40</sup> We noted earlier that "Understanding" is sometimes used by Hegel in a limited and more technical sense, and sometimes in a more Kantian sense to indicate consciousness in general. Here we may be more specific. In so far as it indicates consciousness in general it is associated especially with perception; and Hegel sometimes speaks of *wahrnehmender Verstand*<sup>41</sup> as a single attitude, rather than two distinct attitudes as in the Phenomenology.

In the Philosophy of Mind he associates ordinary consciousness, and especially the attitude of Kant's philosophy, and indeed science in general especially with the attitude of perception.

"The particular grade of consciousness on which Kantism conceives Spirit is perception: which is also the point of view taken by ordinary consciousness, and more or less by the sciences".  
(Philosophy of Mind, p.161 §420).

Perception in general is characterised by an opposition between the universal and the particular, and a tendency to move from the particular to the universal, to subsume the particular under the universal, or to 'classify'. For perception the particular data of the senses count as nothing unless they have been broken down and recognised as examples of universal characteristics, and suitably filed or "pigeon-holed", as

40. Q. Lauer, A reading of Hegel's Phenomenology, Fordham University Press 1976, p. 70f. Wallace translates *Verstand* as 'Intellect', not Understanding.

41. Ibid. Lauer suggests that this is equivalent to *gesunder Menschenverstand* or 'sound common sense'.

Hegel put it in the Preface. If perception is scientific (in the natural scientific, not philosophical sense), it is only in this weak sense, that it analyses and classifies, but not in the stronger sense in which natural science sets out to 'explain' thing by reference to universal laws. This latter attitude is restricted to and more or less defines the attitude of *Verstand* in its more limited sense.

For us, the limitations of this approach are not hard to see. In its analyses and its subsumption of the particular under the universal, the particular itself is lost sight of. Anything which cannot be classified under some universal heading becomes merely 'accidental', and of no value. Individual living things cannot be grasped by perception, and the notion of life eludes it. Indeed, as Kojève remarks in a characteristically pithy footnote, it has no reason even to respect life, and every reason not to do so.

"...a conceptual or "scientific" understanding of the dog actually leads, sooner or later, to its *dissection*". (Kojève op. cit. p. 141n).

As we have already remarked, this lifeless and even murderous attitude is a general characteristic of consciousness. It is especially visible in perception. However, natural consciousness, which is limited to the attitude of consciousness, is not able to grasp this as we are. We already have the notion of and experience of life, and it is easy for us to criticise perception from our privileged point of view. Perception itself, however, need not acknowledge our point of view, and the point is for us to lead it to such an acknowledgement through its own experience.

The purpose of the dialectic of the experience of consciousness is to do this. It does not, however, result immediately in the experience of life,

and this experience, which refers consciousness to self-consciousness, does not occur until the end of Understanding. The dialectic of perception serves only to introduce the notion of Understanding. Formally speaking, it follows fairly closely the pattern of sense-certainty. We will summarise it here only very briefly as follows. Perception takes the universal to be a property of the thing it perceives. In the form of a property, the universal is essentially conditioned (*bedingt*)<sup>42</sup> by the thing. Nevertheless, the universal property and the particular thing are opposed to each other, each being a different substance. The universal is thought, the property matter, we might say. It follows that in classifying the particular under the universal, perception relies not on a rational or necessary connection of the one with the other, but only on an empirical or synthetic connection. It is therefore liable to error or 'deception', and it follows that in its own terms it is not true.

Perception overcomes this difficulty eventually by regarding both the particular and the universal as determinations of thought, so that they are therefore compatible with each other. However, this means abandoning the idea that defined perception, since the universal is no longer conditioned by the object, but is freely thought. It is no longer *bedingt* but rather *unbedingt*, and we arrive at the notion of the "unconditioned universal", which defines the attitude of the Understanding.

"These pure determinatenesses (of Perception) seem to express the essential nature itself, but they are only being-for-self which is burdened with being-for-another. Since, however, both are essentially in a single unity, what we have now is unconditioned absolute universality, and consciousness here for the first time truly enters the realm of the Understanding" (Phenomenology, p.97).

42. *Bedingt* carries in German a connotation of uncertainty while the the common expression "*Unbedingt!*" means unconditionally true, and corresponds to the English expression "Certainly!".



## (d) Force and the Understanding: Appearance and the Supersensible World.

We have already mentioned the overall aim of the chapter on Understanding, that is, to lead consciousness *via* the notion of life to the realisation that it is essentially self-conscious. We may add here that, as commentators have noted, the way Hegel had divided up his discussion of consciousness suggests a particular concern with Kant's conceptual schema. Kant's system begins, as does the Phenomenology, with intuition. It then adds the conceptual framework of the Understanding, which in Hegel's interpretation also embraces perception. It then adds in also the "transcendental unity of apperception; which corresponds to self-consciousness in Hegel. The major difference between Hegel and Kant, then, can be seen in the fact that while Kant adds these faculties together as independent entities Hegel discovers them within each other and shows their necessary relationship to each other, and therefore to the whole of which they are part or in which they are related. Self-consciousness therefore is presented not as an addition to consciousness, or as another object which it may perceive (though this is the way it appears to natural consciousness) but as something which is itself within consciousness and is essentially a part of all consciousness. Hegel wants not so much to reject Kant's schema, as to break up its hard mechanical outlines, and to present instead a warmer and more human picture of consciousness.

"The battle of reason is the struggle to break up the rigidity to which the understanding has reduced everything". (lesser Logic, p. 52, §32) 43

If the general strategy of the section on Understanding is reasonably clear, the more detailed points of the argument are less clear, especially to the modern reader. The notion of the supersensible world in particular has given rise to some confusion.

The supersensible world is the direct result of the notion of the unconditioned universal. Universals which are not conditioned by thinghood must exist separately from it in a world which is not sensible but supersensible. It is tempting therefore to identify the supersensible world with the world of forms in Plato. Hegel himself suggests this connection in the History of Philosophy, in the context of a discussion of Plato's view of the immortality of the soul.

"The beautiful, the good, the like, being all simple, are incapable of change; that on the contrary in which these things are, men, things, etc., are the changeable. They are perceptible by the senses, while the former is supersensuous." (History of Philosophy, Vol. 2, p. 42).

The fact that in the Phenomenology the idea of the supersensible world is introduced directly following on from an apparent reference to Plato's "cave"<sup>44</sup> strengthens this view.

However, if the platonic world of forms is supersensible, it would be wrong to conclude that the reverse is also true, and that the supersensible world is the world of platonic form.<sup>45</sup> The difference between the two may be expressed by saying that platonic form is perceptible in the phenomenal world, whereas the supersensible of the understanding cannot be. In Plato's view, though the forms themselves are supersensible, we need them in order to understand the phenomenal world, and understand the phenomenal world through them and as a manifestation of them, or as informed. I cannot recognise that an object is beautiful, for example,

44. Phenomenology, p. 88: "The result is of course, the same if a blind man is placed amid the wealth of the supersensible world ... and if one with sight is placed in pure darkness", etc.

45. Gadamer, in Hegel's Dialectic, Ch.2 appears to take this view, in his generally illuminating discussion of "Hegel's Inverted World".

unless I already have an idea of what beauty is; but the object itself nevertheless appears to be beautiful. The supersensible world of Understanding, on the other hand, is essentially hypothetical. It is the "self-existent inner being"<sup>46</sup> of things. Since it is 'inner' we cannot perceive it directly, and we accept that it is what it is only in so far as it serves to explain what does appear. It is thus not so much form as law.<sup>47</sup>

The supersensible world of Understanding therefore, is essentially alien and thinglike. Though we do not have to recognise it, in so far as we do we are asked to recognise its laws as rigidly true. The scientist may for example say, "if you wish to understand the phenomenon of electricity, then you *must* understand and accept the law that electricity flows from positive to negative poles". Such an argument cannot be proposed from the standpoint of platonic form. Form is less alien and I recognise it freely, not in virtue of some necessity. I may acknowledge beauty, for example, but I also reserve the right to find ugly an object others find beautiful. The supersensible world of understanding is, as an object of consciousness, thinglike, and I am not part of it, while platonic form is not alien in this sense. It belongs equally to me, I am part of it, and in this sense we may say that in so far as it appears in Hegel it is as a part of Reason rather than Understanding. However, if we recognise this difference, we may then say that the purpose of the dialectic of the experience of understanding is precisely to lead beyond the alien notion

46. Philosophy of Mind, p.163 §422.

47. Ibid.

of the supersensible of Understanding, towards the more friendly supersensible of platonic form or of the Idea, in which I find myself, and which therefore refers the Understanding to self-consciousness. The objective world becomes thereby not so much a brute fact, whose existence I must therefore simply accept,<sup>48</sup> but something which contains an element of myself and to which I may therefore more easily reconcile myself; though this reconciliation does not in fact occur until self-consciousness has developed into Reason.

The unconditioned universal in Hegel's account is represented as force, which in so far as it is held to be present in all phenomena, cannot be a specific property of any particular phenomenon, and in this sense is perfectly unconditioned.<sup>49</sup>

The experience of force leads natural consciousness through the experience of the play of forces to posit the idea of the supersensible world which we have just examined.<sup>50</sup> It then discovers that since it has made this world into a beyond, it cannot claim to know it,

48. This attitude may be observed for example, in Freud's notion of the "reality principle": (see eg. New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis, Pelican 1976, p.108). Freud's view conceives of Spirit not so much from the point of view of perception, as does Kant, as from the point of view specifically of Understanding; seeking not so much to categorise or pigeon-hole, as to explain.

49. The reference to the notion of force here is to Newton. Perhaps Hegel might have modified his account in the light of modern natural science. It seems strange to the modern reader to make the concept of force so central. To his contemporaries this probably seemed less arbitrary, and both Leibniz and Schelling, for example, used the notion of force in order to reach the notion of life. (Hyppolite, op. cit. p.121). In any case, to substitute more modern conceptions of the supersensible would not affect Hegel's argument, which is directed against the form of the supersensible, not its content.

50. Phenomenology, p. 87.

"just because in the *void* nothing is known, or, expressed from the other side, just because this inner world is determined as the beyond of consciousness". (Phenomenology p.88)

It therefore redefines the supersensible not as a beyond, but as "*appearance qua appearance*".<sup>51</sup>

Appearance qua appearance, however, lacks on its own any principle of stability, and the understanding, which cannot tolerate such contingency, introduces a stable principle which it discovered earlier as the principle of unity in the universal flux of the play of forces. Here it becomes the law of force, which for Hegel is "the stable image of unstable appearance".<sup>52</sup> The supersensible world thus becomes the unchangeable, since it consists of the world of appearance, in so far as its laws govern the behaviour of the flux of experience.

51. Heidegger and Sartre make the same move when they contrast to the Kantian noumenon the "phenomenon of being". This is opposed to the being of the phenomenon in much the same way as a noumenon is opposed to a phenomenon, without yet being noumenal and Sartre calls it 'transphenomenal'. See Sartre, Being and Nothingness, op.cit. pp. xxiv-xxvi.

52. Phenomenology, p.90.

These two ideas, law and explanation, are the two most fundamental concepts characteristic of Understanding,<sup>53</sup> and with them Understanding is in its element. The scientific attitude in perceiving a phenomenon is not satisfied until it can say that, given certain circumstances, this phenomenon *had* to occur. Understanding does not merely perceive the apple falling from the tree, but also grasps that

"In the case of the motion of falling, *Force* is the simple factor, *gravity*, whose *law* is that the magnitudes of the different moments of the motion, the time elapsed and the *space* travelled, and related to each other as root and square".  
(Phenomenology, p.92)

We may note parenthetically that if this attitude is at home in natural science, it may also be found in social science, and is objectionable there in a special sense, in so far as the phenomenon it attempts to explain in terms of law is a society made up of subjectively free

53. The term explanation (*Erklären*) is used by Hegel here and generally in a limited sense. It applies only to a 'scientific' style of explanation, which tends to reduce the appearance to be explained to an expression of the law governing its appearance. Hegel therefore avoids using the term explanation in connection with Spirit, since Spirit, because it is absolute, is precisely beyond any such explanation. If explanation were allowed to include not only 'scientific' explanation but also the kind of explanation which is suggested by Aristotle's theory of causality, and which grants independence to the phenomenon to be explained, this would not be necessary. Further, we may note that within the scientific paradigm, Hegel's notion of explanation appears to be limited to what Hempel calls "deductive-nomological explanation", and does not include "probabilistic" explanation which is causal but does not refer specifically or directly to the notion of Law. See C.G.Hempel, Philosophy of Natural Science, Prentice-Hall 1966, Chapter 5. Hegel can be found making some witty observations about 'explanation' in a short article called "Who Thinks Abstractly?" which is included in Kaufmann (op. cit. p. 461 ff,) and was probably written shortly after the Phenomenology.



individuals, who cause themselves, and cannot therefore adequately be explained in terms of an external cause. This attitude may be seen particularly clearly in Freud, where the supersensible appears as the unconscious and its law as the Oedipus complex;<sup>54</sup> and equally in Marx, where the supersensible world is the world of value (as opposed to price), and its law that it is determined by socially necessary abstract labour time.<sup>55</sup>

Understanding, then, wants to grasp appearance as necessary, but, Hegel argues, "necessity here is an empty word".<sup>56</sup> The type of explanation Hegel has presented collapses into a simple tautology. The supersensible world we have considered is a simple copy of the perceived world, and rather than truly presenting phenomena as necessary, it simply describes them in a different language.

"The single occurrence of lightening, eg. is apprehended as a universal, and this universal is enunciated as the *law* of electricity; the explanation then condenses the *law* into *Force* as the essence of the law. This Force, the, is so *constituted* that when it is expressed, opposite electricities appear, which disappear again into one another; that is *Force is constituted exactly the same as law*". (Phenomenology, p.95)

The inadequacy of this tautological type of explanation may be seen especially clearly in the cases of Psychoanalysis and Marxism. Freud, especially in his later work, argues that everyone has an Oedipus complex, and the central aim of a psychoanalysis is to allow the patient to discover this fact. The root and explanation of any neurosis as well as any

54. See Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams, Pelican 1976, pp.362-366.

55. See Marx, Capital, Lawrence and Wishart 1970, esp. Ch.1. and pp. 51-53.

56. Phenomenology, p. 93.

normal psyche is held to lie in the Oedipus complex. Every psychological phenomenon is therefore held to have the same cause. However, this just means that no particular phenomenon has been elucidated. The theory is then either merely a generalisation from experience, in which case it is neither truly universal, nor capable of functioning as an explanation; or it is something beyond knowledge, that is unconscious, and we may legitimately ask how we may in that case claim to know anything about it.

In Marx, too, there are similar difficulties. What, really, is the relationship of price to value? On the one hand value may be a generalisation or averaging of price. This seems to be what is normally meant by the word, and is suggested by Marx's reasoning in so far as he defends the labour theory of value by arguing that though in his view price and value differ systematically, total price nevertheless equals total value. On the other hand, he introduces the notion of value, and develops it, quite distinctly from price, arguing that there is a necessary connection<sup>57</sup> between labour time and value, and that value ultimately determines price. In this case, value is entirely separate from price, and we must ask how, since it does not take phenomenal form except as

57. Marx shares the labour theory of value with the political economists, and it is, of course, equally objectionable in both cases, in so far as it sets out to explain a subjective action without reference to a subjective motivation. Only Marx, however, (perhaps sensing the weakness of the theory) attempts to hoodwink us with a supposedly necessary and purely logical deduction of the law of value. (The 'deduction' may be found in Capital, Vol. I Lawrence and Wishart 1974, p.46).

price, is it possible in any sense to know it?<sup>58</sup> If in the world of natural science we may say that explanation does not express a truth in the proper sense of the word, then, in social science we may say that it is objectionable in a much stronger sense, and should be rejected altogether.

If the explanations of Understanding are to have any value, then it is necessary, in order to avoid the charge of tautology, to make the supersensible world different from the sensible world, the cause different from the effect. It makes sense to say that hunger causes me to eat, but not that hunger causes me to be hungry. In order to be different from the sensible world, indeed in order to be different from anything, it is necessary that the supersensible world be not simply universal, but capable of a specific content. As it stands, "the perceived world still retains for itself the principle of change and alteration".<sup>59</sup> This principle must be given to the supersensible world, in order for its explanations to be capable of any specific content. This may be done in Hegel's view only if the supersensible world is held to contain not only purely positive and abstractly universal concepts such as Force, but also concepts which carry a negative significance, or imply not just what they are, but also what they are not. Force is found equally everywhere, but to explain or even to describe a phenomenon we must have recourse to concepts which are found in specific cases only,

58. E. von Böhm-Bawerk, the Austrian political economist, has stressed these points especially in his "Karl Marx and the Close of his System". This is published together with an essay by Hilferding in Böhm-Bawerk's Criticism of Marx (ed. Sweezy) London, Merlin Press, 1974. Böhm-Bawerk's Capital and Interest is also of relevance, and much of the essay on "Karl Marx etc." is taken directly from this work.

59. Phenomenology, p. 96.

and not in others. This means including the idea of negation. As Hegel comments in his Logic:

"The foundation of all determinateness is negation (as Spinoza says, *omnis determinatio est negatio*)" (Lesser Logic, p. 135, §9).

However, it is not strictly possible to introduce negativity into the supersensible world. What must be introduced is after all precisely what that world is not. For this reason, Hegel proposes the notion of the second supersensible world. If a specific determination, such as sweetness, is to be introduced into the super-sensible world, its opposite, sourness must also be introduced; and because this is its opposite it must be held to belong to a second and inverted world. If somewhere we find sweetness and light, we must also know that somewhere else there is bitterness<sup>60</sup> and darkness.

This unfamiliar and perhaps also obscure idea is, as Gadamer has argued,<sup>61</sup> the most important stage in the experience of Understanding. If Hegel is right, it has been arrived at solely through the experience of Understanding. Nevertheless, with the second supersensible world we have already stepped outside the boundaries of consciousness. An explanation which is offered in its terms is no longer the disinterested causal explanation of understanding, but is a *judgement*, and the ego is self-consciously involved in it. It confesses therefore that it is interested in its explanation, and by this stroke the supersensible world of understanding has been replaced with the "Idea" of Reason, which corresponds to the world of platonic Form. It remains only to spell this out to Understanding itself.

60. Or at least, non-sweetness.

61. Gadamer op. cit. p.35.

Understanding cannot tolerate contradiction. However, as Hegel argued in the Spirit of Christianity and its Fate, "what is a contradiction in the realm of the dead is not one in the realm of life".<sup>62</sup> He has shown to the Understanding in its own terms that it must think contradiction, that this is a necessary part of any knowledge. He illustrates this by taking an example from outside the strict limits of Understanding, of law 'in another sphere', that is, as penal law. If we apply the attitude of Understanding here, the result is a positivist thinking which cannot distinguish crime from punishment, seeing only that both are equally inflictions of injury. For understanding, *summa ius est summa iniure*.<sup>63</sup> Yet clearly this is inadequate, since, in spite of the pun, the injury which is inflicted in punishment is held to be just. For the thinking which accommodates the notion of the second supersensible world, however, the fact that an injury can be both just and unjust is no contradiction.

"The punishment which under the law of the first world disgraces and destroys a man is transformed in its inverted world into the pardon which preserves his essential being and brings him honour."  
(Phenomenology, p.97). 64

62. ETW, p. 261. In the Early Theological Writings, we should recall, life is not differentiated from Spirit.
63. The greatest justice is the greatest injury. Cf. note 1 to this chapter.
64. This, of course, relates to the notion of punishment as reconciliation which Hegel discusses in The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate, and which was discussed in Ch. 1 above; and to the notion of evil and its forgiveness discussed in the Phenomenology, p. 383 ff.

In thinking contradiction in this way, Hegel argues, the limited and finite thought of Understanding becomes capable of grasping the infinite, or rather becomes infinite itself.<sup>65</sup> The supersensible world taken as a whole, or as the "inner world", includes within itself both the notion of unity or self-identity and the principle of difference.<sup>66</sup> And, as Hegel says

"This simple infinity, or the absolute notion, may be called the simple essence of life, the soul of the world, the universal blood, whose omnipresence is neither disturbed nor interrupted by any difference, but rather is itself supersession; it pulsates within itself, but does not move, inwardly vibrates, yet is at rest". (Phenomenology, p.100).

We have arrived then at the notion of an independent existence which transcends the Understanding's explanation, escapes its reductions, which is alive and which determines itself; and which, in relation to Understanding is absolute. Such a being however, is not an object but essentially a subject or an 'I'. We have therefore discovered within the Understanding in the form of an object the principle which we know to be lacking from it because we know it to be incapable of judgement: that is the principle of self-subsistent individuality.

This means, in effect, that consciousness has become aware of itself. Initially, and in accordance with the notion of experience, it has come across itself as an object, as life. However, once it has discovered itself as an object it is also in a position to recognise itself also as being involved in all consciousness. All the concepts of the understanding are in fact necessarily self-conscious. Laws do not belong to a supersensible world but

65. Or, as Hegel says in the lesser Logic, p.49 §28, thought becomes 'Speculative'. The notion of infinity here as unity-in-diversity should be contrasted with the 'bad' or 'wrong' (*Schlechte*) infinity, "an abstract way and away for ever and ever", (ibid) which Hegel also discusses later on p. 137, §94 of the lesser Logic.

66. Phenomenology, p. 99.



"...are determinations of the intellectual consciousness [*Verstand*] inherent in the world itself, therefore the intellectual consciousness finds them in its own nature and thus becomes objective to itself". (Philosophy of Mind, p. 163 §422).

Similarly, explanation, properly understood, is a game consciousness plays with itself.

"The reason why explaining affords so much satisfaction is just because in it consciousness is, so to speak, commencing directly with itself; although it seems to be busy with something else, it is in fact occupied only with itself" (Phenomenology, p.101).

If we draw the curtain of appearance, then, in order to reveal a true reality, what we find is neither a hypothetical nor a noumenal world, but our own selves. However, this reveals self-consciousness only as something isolated, "not yet as a unity with consciousness in general". In other words, though we found characteristics of Reason in Hegel's description of the second supersensible world, we cannot go on directly to consider Reason in its own right. Firstly, we must consider self-consciousness independently and in its own right, before we return to self-consciousness, or Reason.

## CHAPTER FIVE : Self-Consciousness

## (a) Self-Consciousness in General

"With self-consciousness, we have entered the native realm of Truth".<sup>1</sup>

Consciousness defined its object as essentially or qualitatively different from itself<sup>2</sup>. Object and thought were different types of being, and it followed from this that thought would only more or less accurately reflect, mimic, or represent an object, but would never be identical with it, so that its knowledge could not claim to be necessarily true. Self-consciousness, by contrast, defines its object as itself, and since it is evidently of the same quality as itself, it is possible for there to be a true identity between its thought and its object, rather than a mere correspondance. Its truth is in thought and it is capable therefore of being represented as necessary. Self-consciousness, then is not a certainty which should be opposed to truth,

"but a certainty which is identical with its truth, for the certainty is to itself its own object, and consciousness is to itself the Truth". (Phenomenology, p.104).

As Descartes, whom Hegel acknowledges to be the father of modern philosophy, argued, it is reasonable to doubt my senses, but it would amount to an absurdity to doubt my own existence.<sup>3</sup> I am not merely probable, nor even merely certain, but undoubtably true.

1. Phenomenology, p.104

2. On the relation of essence to quality see Lesser Logic p. 124 ff and especially the *Zusatz* to §85.

3. See Descartes, Discourse on Method, especially the opening pages of the Fourth Discourse (Descartes, Discourse on Method and The Meditations, Penguin, 1968, p. 53 f). In the History of Philosophy Hegel comments that "it is not until Descartes arrived that we really enter upon a philosophy which is, properly speaking, independent, which knows that it comes forth from reason as independent, and that self-consciousness is an essential moment of truth". (History of Philosophy Vol. 3, London 1896, p.217)

Putting this same observation into the language of Kant and Fichte, we can say that while consciousness is conditioned by its object, self-consciousness is independent. Consciousness is essentially conscious of something, and it therefore depends upon the thing of which it is conscious. Self-consciousness by contrast depends only on itself, and it follows that it is independent of external things. This is expressed especially in Fichte's formula for self-consciousness, "I am I".

In Fichte, this independence is also freedom. However, Hegel argues that if self-consciousness is expressed in this way it is in fact neither free, nor even knowledge. Considered abstractly, self-consciousness

"is only the motionless tautology of: "I am I"; but since for it the difference does not have the form of *being*, it is *not* self-consciousness". (Phenomenology, p. 105).

Fichte's "I am I" is an expression of identity, a relationship of a subject to a subject. Knowledge, on the other hand, must be a relationship of a subject to a predicate. This relationship, in the case of self-consciousness, will always be one of identity, beginning with the words "I am", and its predicates will never be grammatically accusative. It cannot say 'I am me' or 'me am I'. Nevertheless, it must take a determinate objective form in order to know itself, and to be determinate it must know what it is not. Its self-identity must contain difference; or, it must be infinite or alive. For this reason the abstract independence suggested by 'I am I' does not on its own count as freedom.

"A freedom involving no necessity, and mere necessity without freedom, are abstract and in this way untrue formulae of thought. Freedom is no blank indeterminateness: essentially concrete, and invariably self-determinate, it is so far at the same time necessary". (Lesser Logic, p. 55 §35).

Self-consciousness does in fact rise to the level of freedom in Hegel's account, but only when it reaches its third stage, which indeed is called Freedom of Self-Consciousness, or, as the corresponding section in the Philosophy of Mind is headed, Universal self-consciousness. At this level self-consciousness becomes free but still in a limited sense because it is defined as a being which thinks. In this shape, self-consciousness is

"aware of itself as essential being, a being which *thinks* or is free self-consciousness. For *to think* does not mean to be an *abstract* 'I', but an 'I' which has at the same time the significance of *intrinsic* being, of having itself for object, or of relating to objective being in such a way that its significance is the *being-for-self* of the consciousness for which it is an object ." (Phenomenology, p.120).

It is important therefore to distinguish the independence self-consciousness achieves through mastery from the freedom it achieves through thought.<sup>4</sup>

If so far as self-consciousness does eventually achieve freedom, and also achieves truth, it may at first sight seem that we have already

4. Kojève, for example, elides the two ideas. Shklar identifies autonomy, independence, liberty, and self-sufficiency (op.cit p xv) but distinguishes freedom from independence. Independence carries a meaning similar to the Hobbesian notion of freedom, i.e. absence of external limitation, while freedom carries a meaning closer to Rousseau's, and is achieved through citizenship in spite of the limitations which citizenship implies. For Shklar this latter freedom is achieved in Hegel's state only in a limited form through "membership of ethical groups" (op. cit. p.208). Hegel's distinction of freedom and independence however is different. Rousseau views freedom essentially as reason: it consists in the dominance of the rational or general (the 'group') over the individual. For Hegel, freedom is not reason but thought. In reason, in Rousseau's interpretation, I am constrained by the rules of reason; that is, I am constrained to think generally and universally and to ignore anything particular, especially my self. In simply thinking, however, no such constraint is imposed. I can think as I like and am free in particular to include my own personal interests and fancies.

arrived at the end of the phenomenological development, which Hegel earlier defined as the point where "Notion corresponds to object and object to Notion".<sup>5</sup> Hegel himself calls self-consciousness "the Notion of Spirit", and seems to suggest that all that remains is to fill out this abstract Notion.

"A self-consciousness, in being an object, is just as much 'I' as object. With this we already have before us the Notion of Spirit. What still lies ahead for consciousness is the experience of what Spirit is - this absolute substance which is the unity of the different independent self-consciousness which, in their opposition, enjoy perfect freedom and independence: 'I' that is 'we', and 'we' that is 'I'. It is in self-consciousness, in the Notion of Spirit, that consciousness first finds its turning point, where it leaves behind the colourful show of the here-and-now and the nightlike void of the supersensible beyond, and steps out into the spiritual daylight of the present". (Phenomenology, p.110 f) 6

However, as has already been argued, it would be mistaken to regard self-consciousness as having an exalted position in Hegel's thought, and self-consciousness should rather be understood as a moment of Spirit which is neither more nor less significant than consciousness and Reason. If self-consciousness is both free and true, there are nevertheless distinct limitations both to its freedom, and its truth, which we will consider before going on to look at its individual moments.

5. Phenomenology, p. 51.

6. The Critical Philosophy, by contrast, in moving away from the colourful diversity of nature stepped not into a spiritual daylight, but into a world of abstract universals, and thus "bade men to go and feed on mere husks and chaff" (Lesser Logic, p. 48 §28).

The freedom of self-consciousness is not the same as the freedom of Spirit. Spirit and self-consciousness are both free, and it is in this sense that self-consciousness is the Notion of Spirit. However, in the Philosophy of Mind, Hegel calls Reason the "Notion of Spirit,"<sup>7</sup> for much the same reason. This should not be interpreted as a change of position (though it may well be a change in emphasis), because both self-consciousness and Reason can be characterised as the Notion of Spirit, but in rather different senses. Self-consciousness is free in so far as it has itself for an object, or thinks. However, it is by definition incapable of being consciousness of something other than itself, without thereby ceasing to be self-consciousness and becoming Reason instead. If it has the notion of freedom, then, it is nevertheless denied the dimension of freedom in relation to an objective world, and it always encounters the objective world as the opposite of itself, a limitation to its freedom. It remains freedom of thought only, or the thought only of freedom. Reason, which knows the objective world also as itself and which is essentially a relation of consciousness to this world achieves this dimension of freedom, in relation to the world and in this sense its freedom is more concrete than that of self-consciousness. Its object is grammatically accusative. However, the freedom of Reason too is limited, since it remains the freedom of a reasoning subject, and it is only Spirit's intuition of the Reason which it has as Reason which exists which gives freedom in the full Hegelian sense of the word. The freedom of Reason and the freedom of Spirit are therefore both qualitatively different from the freedom of self-consciousness, and it follows that they cannot be

7. Philosophy of Mind, p. 157, §417



reduced to expressions of the same freedom which is found in self-consciousness.

The truth of self-consciousness is likewise limited. If self-consciousness is the "native realm of truth", it is by no means on that account "the height of knowledge".<sup>8</sup> It is only knowledge of the self, and though it may take the self as an object, its thinking nevertheless never goes beyond the bounds of the merely subjective. In practice, it takes up the standpoint of existentialism, and shares all the inadequacy and conceit of that attitude which recognises only itself. Otherness, except in so far as it may be regarded as an objectification of the Ego through work or language, is simply alien to it, and it therefore sees it as merely contingent. In so far as it is contingent, it is unnecessary, is not thought, and cannot therefore be said to be known.<sup>9</sup> It does not Reason. Similarly, when it looks at objective Spirit, it finds absurdity. Objective Spirit is for it simply an objectification of the subjective, and since the subject is free it follows that there is no ground for saying that it should take any specific objective form, since this would amount to a limitation on its freedom. It therefore does not recognise the ethical or political as having any value of <sup>their</sup> own.<sup>10</sup> Their

8. R. Aronson, Jean-Paul Sartre, London 1980 p.129.

9. In Sartre's Nausea, for example, Roquentin cannot find a word to describe his awareness of being, and simply leaves a blank.

10. "It follows that my freedom is the unique foundation of values, and nothing, absolutely nothing justifies me in adopting this or that particular value, this or that particular scale of values". (Sartre, Being and Nothingness, op.cit. p.38). Sartre attempted to retract his nihilism later, for example in Existentialism and Humanism; but succeeds only in so far as he turns his back on some of his earlier positions and adopts some orthodox Kantian ideas. (Existentialism and Humanism, Methuen 1948 p. 32 and p.52).

value, if they are admitted to have any, is always accounted in terms of the subject.

The presentation of self-consciousness in the Phenomenology is divided into three parts. The self for self-consciousness is an object, and it therefore divides itself into the three aspects which are always characteristic of the object of consciousness. The first aspect, corresponding to sense-certainty, is Desire. It takes the ego simply as an object or as life, and is the simplest and most general relation of consciousness to its object. The second aspect, corresponding to perception, is Lordship and Bondage. Here the ego is regarded as a universal or as a property of the object, and we see natural consciousness attempting to possess this property. The third aspect, corresponding to Understanding, grasps the ego as an unconditioned universal or as freedom, and considers the relation of self to self and to other, or mutual recognition.

"Self-consciousness has in its culture, or movement, three stages: (1) of Desire in so far as it is related to other things: (2) of the Mediating relation of master and slave (dominion and servitude) in so far as it is related to another self-consciousness not identical with itself; (3) of the general self-consciousness which recognises itself in other self-consciousnesses, and is identical with them as well as self-identical". (Propadeutic p.174)

We will consider each of these separately.

## (b) Desire and Life

"Self-consciousness is *Desire* in general"<sup>11</sup>. Desire is the most general and therefore also the most abstract characteristic of self-consciousness, just as sensation is the most general and most abstract characteristic of consciousness. If sensation gives a relation of an ego to an object, desire turns consciousness towards itself, since it is its own desire, and it is conscious that it must do something in order to satisfy it. Desire, it is true, is a natural phenomenon, but Hegel does not accept Plato's conclusion that in desire I am tied to natural being. Consciousness is tied to nature, but desire exhibits a freedom from nature, which freedom we have already encountered at least once in Hegel's reference to the Eleusinian mysteries, to the "secret meaning of the eating of bread and drinking of wine".<sup>12</sup> Desire is essentially my own, and a desired object is not independent, but on the contrary exists only for me, and to be consumed, so that its truth is not in its being but in its destruction.

The desire which characterises self-consciousness is essentially the desire of Spirit, not animal desire, as has been suggested.<sup>13</sup> Kojève argues rightly that the discussion of desire cannot be intended as an anthropogenesis, that is an account of the origins of the human within

11 Phenomenology, p.105.

12 In the Preface, (Phenomenology, p. 26) Hegel similarly calls the truth "a Bacchanalian revel in which no member is not drunk", and goes on immediately to restate his view that knowledge must be self-knowledge or recollection.

13 Kojève op. cit.

the natural.<sup>14</sup> However, his objection to anthropogenesis is only a weak one. In Kojève's view, man is essentially free, and it follows that he cannot be a product of nature. Nevertheless, in Kojève's account (which is in many ways illuminating on this point) Hegel's argument is still presented as an account of the origins of human desire (that is, desire for recognition) in natural desire, and the reason that this account is not anthropogenetic is simply that the transformation of animal desire into human desire is held to be indeducible, that is, to have come about purely by chance. This then commits Kojève to the view that the Hegelian system has a number of *premises* which are to be found at this point. Hegel's argument then takes the form of an argument that if we accept these hypothetical premises, then we will be able to explain everything else in terms of these absolute premises. This, as we have seen, is the approach of Understanding, and is not at all philosophical, since premises and explanations are not truths, and philosophy has to do with truth.

There is in fact a stronger reason why Hegel's account of desire cannot be anthropogenetic. In Hegel's view Spirit cannot be generated at all. It exists, and it may be known. The desire we are considering is the desire of a being which is Spirit. Its experience then is not a learning, in which by examining desire it comes across something new and which was not there before, that is, 'generates' it (though this is the way natural consciousness looks at it), but a 'recollection' in which Spirit 'discovers',

14 Kojève is perhaps thinking of the type of account Engels gives in "The Part Played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man". (Marx and Engels, Selected Works in One Volume, Lawrence & Wishart, 1968, p. 354 ff) (See Kojève op. cit. p. 40).

or better, 'realizes', what significance desire has for it. Hegel's argument makes sense only if Spirit in-itself is 'presupposed', or only on the basis of "the immanence of the whole in consciousness,"<sup>15</sup> as Hyppolite put it. In this case it will be possible to represent the move from desire to recognition not as contingent, but as necessary; but this necessity must be understood as a necessity of thought, not primarily as a historical necessity. Indeed, there is no necessity which is not in (free) thought.

The movement of desire may be characterised as a development from desire in general as *Epithumia*, towards the more specific and sublime desire of *Eros*. The desire of *Epithumia* reveals only a transitory self-consciousness and its aim is the destruction of this self-consciousness, and the return to a peaceful, untroubled state of merely contemplative consciousness in which the ego no longer has any cause to be self-aware. It is in this sense that Freud, speaking of the conservative nature of the instincts, characterises instinctual desire in general as the Death Instinct; the desire no longer to desire. *Epithumia* is Thanatos.<sup>16</sup>

15. Hyppolite op. cit. p.15.

16 Freud's observations are scattered through his writings. Civilisation and its Discontents is probably the most relevant work here. I point out some parallels between Hegel and Freud partly because they illumine Hegel's thought, and partly because they illustrate that Hegel's psychology reaches a depth far beyond the psychology of philosophers whose work is more self-consciously psychological. (E.g. Locke, Mill, etc.) I do not mean to suggest however that Hegel's account is essentially psychological: Hegel would certainly not wish to reduce philosophy to psychology. (cf. Faith and Knowledge, op. cit. p. 63).

In the desire of *Eros*, which Hegel interprets as the desire for recognition, self-consciousness exists in a permanent form. If I desire recognition from another being, I have a desire which can never be fully satisfied, since I cannot consume or destroy the desired object. It is after all not strictly an object, but a subject which I desire, and my desire has therefore undergone what Freud called sublimation, being directed towards an object which is not naturally suited to its satisfaction. In Freud's account this is linked directly to the notion of repression of the Oedipus complex. The infantile death wish against the father is turned into a rivalry which seeks the recognition of the father, or takes the conscious form not of a death wish, but its opposite, Love. Sexual desire, then, is related to Thanatos or the death instinct, while Erotic desire, which is expansive and life giving, is paradoxically a repression of a death wish directed against the father. The conflict of Eros and Thanatos becomes the basis of what Freud calls civilization.

In Hegel's account we find more or less the same picture, though it is less specific. The desire for another self-consciousness<sup>17</sup> is Erotic and it is the basis of the will to do anything which cannot be understood as the result of mere instinctual desire. In this sense it takes the position which Plato gives to *Andreia*, and its ultimate aim, recognition, is parallel to what the ancients called honour, we should not therefore regard recognition or courage<sup>as</sup> essentially different from desire, as Plato does by making each into an element of the soul, but rather should regard recognition itself as a specific form of desire. This does not mean that the instinctual and Erotic aspects of desire are not opposed to each other, but it does mean that they are not so rigidly separated that their reconciliation is impossible.

17 Which Kojève rightly characterises as the desire for a desire (op. cit. p.5).



Hegel's account of the experience of Desire may be summarised briefly as follows.

Desire, in contrast to the Platonic view, is essentially negative: it is awareness of a lack of something. This lack is contradictory to the identity of the ego with itself, and "the necessity felt to cancel this opposition is Impulse (or appetite)".<sup>18</sup> In so far as this appetite is directed towards an object, it produces that object as an object of desire which is both independent of me in so far as I must act in order to obtain it, and is also dependent on me and which I will eventually destroy by consuming it.<sup>19</sup> I need not physically destroy the object, so long as I satisfy the desire, since then the object qua desired object also disappears.

Like consciousness, therefore, desire produces an object which is ambiguously both independent and dependent. However, this ambiguity here takes a more concrete form, since the object of desire is not like the object of conscious a mere thing, which is either for itself or for consciousness, but "a living thing", which exists in and for itself. The independence of such an object is real, and the object subsists until it is actually negated by self-consciousness. The opposition between its independence and dependence is not a mere whim of consciousness, but a matter of life and death.

18. Propadeutic, p. 74.

19. Similarly, in Freud, the infantile Ego emerges in the move from the phase of 'autoerotism' to the phase of 'object choice'.

Self-consciousness however is desire and it seeks satisfaction. In so far as its object is a living thing, however, it cannot fully achieve its satisfaction, since its unity with itself is contradicted by the existence of living things.

"On account of the independence of the object, therefore, it can achieve satisfaction only when the object itself effects the negation; and it must carry out the negation of itself within itself, for it is *in itself* the negative, and must be *for* the other what it *is*". (Phenomenology, p. 109).

Because the object is independent and determines itself, it can be satisfied only if the object determines itself in accordance with the desire of self-consciousness. This satisfaction is possible only if the object is not only alive, but also self-conscious. This incidentally means that, as Freud understood, it is the object of sexual desire: sexual desire is in fact the only desire capable of sublimation.

*"Self-consciousness achieves its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness"*. (Phenomenology, p. 110).

This satisfaction, however, is one in which the object remains independent, and it is through this that desire is able to become creative, rather than destructive, and its satisfaction life giving, not a *petit mort*.

Hegel summarises the movement as follows:

"The notion of self-consciousness is only completed in these three moments: (a) the pure indifferentiated 'I' is its first immediate object (b) But the immediacy ~~is~~ itself an absolute mediation, it is only as a supersession of the independent object, in other words, it is Desire. The satisfaction of Desire is, it is true, the reflection of self-consciousness into itself, or the certainty that has become truth. (c) But the truth of this certainty is really a double reflection, the duplication of self-consciousness. Consciousness has for its object one which, of its own self, posits its otherness or difference as a nothingness, and in so doing is independent. The differentiated, merely *living* shape does indeed supersede its independence in the process of life, but it ceases with its distinctive difference to be what it is. The object of self-consciousness, however, is equally independent in this negativity of itself: and thus it is *for itself* a genus, a universal fluid element in the peculiarity of its own separate being; it is a living self-consciousness". (Phenomenology, p.110).

- (c) Lordship and Bondage: Dependence and Independence of Self-consciousness.

Lordship and Bondage is almost certainly the best known passage in the Phenomenology, and it is also by some people the best liked. It has been published separately in English translation on at least one occasion,<sup>20</sup> and its influence can be found in a wide variety of writing, much of which takes little else from Hegel. Kojève makes it the centre of his interpretation and turns it into an introduction to Hegelian thought - and uses it for other purposes, for example as an analytical tool to analyse a classical text.<sup>21</sup> Sartre adopts it with some minor adjustments, and makes it a central plank in his thought.<sup>22</sup> Simone de Beauvoir applies it to the study of sexuality,<sup>23</sup> and this connection can also be seen in Sacher Masoch and Pauline Réage.<sup>24</sup> Marx too was profoundly affected by it when he wrote the 1844 Manuscripts, though its influence on Marx has probably been overstated.<sup>25</sup>

20. In Connerton (ed.) Critical Sociology, Penguin 1976, pp. 41-51.
21. Kojève op. cit.; and Kojève, "Tyranny and Wisdom" in Leo Strauss, On Tyranny, MacMillan 1963, which is a translation and commentary on Xenophon's "Hiero".
22. Sartre op. cit., esp. pp. 238-244.
23. Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex, Penguin 1977, see esp. p. 171ff. See also Carol Craig "The Use of Hegel's dialectic of Master and Slave in de Beauvoir's The Second Sex", Edinburgh University Thesis 1980. (Lordship and Bondage is sometimes referred to as "Master and Slave" or "The master-slave dialectic". I have preferred to keep the former translation to avoid overstressing the connection to the empirical relation of master and slave, for reasons set out later in this section).
24. Sacher Masoch alludes to Hegel by name in the opening pages of Venus in Furs. Pauline Réage does not mention Hegel directly, but in Story of O the influence of Hegel's Lordship and Bondage via the interpretations of Sartre and de Beauvoir is plain. Pauline Réage is a pseudonym of an anonymous writer. Suggestions that she is in fact de Beauvoir herself however, while plausible in terms of the content of the book, seem unlikely for stylistic and other reasons.
25. See Marx, Early Writings, ed. Colletti, Pelican 1975 p. 379ff. Marx calls the Phenomenology in general, not as Connerton (op.cit. p.40) implies the passage on Lordship and Bondage in particular, "the true birthplace and secret of Hegelian philosophy", and as Lenin pointed out it was Hegel's Science of Logic which particularly influenced Marx. (see Kaufmann op.cit. p. 288).

We may agree that Lordship and Bondage is a particularly striking part of the Phenomenology. It is at this point that it first becomes apparent that Hegel intends to transcend the dry intellectualism of the philosophy of his day to bring in to philosophy the experiences and the problems of everyday social life; and this is one of the most immediately striking and attractive peculiarities of Hegel's thought. However, there is no indication that Hegel thought that Lordship and Bondage had a special position in his work. He barely mentions it again in the Phenomenology, and certainly does not attempt to use it elsewhere as a tool for social analysis, though we may presume that if he had intended to do so he would have had ample opportunity, for example, in the Philosophy of History or perhaps the Philosophy of Right. If a disproportionately large space is devoted to it here, it is only because of the attention it has already attracted, and because in virtue of this a number of issues of interpretation of the Phenomenology in general can be illuminated particularly at this point.

Hegel opens his discussion of Lordship and Bondage with the words

"Self-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged." (Phenomenology, p.111)

Self-consciousness cannot be held to exist in the proper sense of that word in a noumenal or 'transphenomenal' <sup>25</sup> form: it exists in and for itself only when it exists for another or is phenomenal. If self-consciousness is essentially desire, it is equally essentially sublimated

25. Sartre, in order to distinguish his formula for self-consciousness, the 'pre-reflexive cogito', from the noumenal self of Kant and Fichte, coined the term 'transphenomenal'. (Sartre op. cit. p. 9).

desire or recognition. In so far as this recognition is of self-consciousness as independent, we get Lordship and Bondage; in so far as it is of self-consciousness as free, we get Stoicism, Scepticism and what Hegel calls the 'Unhappy Consciousness'.

Hegel's presentation of Lordship and Bondage divides especially neatly into an introductory section which is "for us", and then a longer and more detailed presentation of the same movement as the experience of natural consciousness.<sup>26</sup>

For us, self-consciousness, since it is self-identical, is independent. This, however, is contradicted by the existence of other self-consciousness, in so far as it is likewise independent and capable of acting as a limitation upon the independence of the first. Self-consciousness is therefore moved to destroy the independence of other self-consciousness; and since the other is independent it must do this by making it independently renounce its own independence, and recognise only the first as essential, independent, and absolute. This produces the notion of recognition. We know, however, that recognition is not limited to this blank opposition of dependence to independence, but involves more specific determinations, that is recognition of more specific qualities and virtues. In so far as recognition is in this way not a blank opposition but a mediation<sup>27</sup> between

26. The discussion 'for us' goes from §178 to §184 inclusive, and the experience of natural consciousness from §185 to §196.

27. Elsewhere Hegel calls the independence of self-consciousness "purely immediate freedom", and in this sense we should not oppose independence to freedom but regard the former as the immediate idea or the in-itself of the latter. (Philosophy of Right, p. 48 §57).

self-consciousnesses, we have moved beyond the attitude of Lordship and Bondage to an attitude corresponding to Understanding where we find unconditioned "universal self-consciousness".<sup>28</sup> Here we discover that "they recognise themselves as mutually recognising one another".<sup>29</sup>

The purpose of the presentation of the experience of natural consciousness of recognition is to lead it from the notion of mere independence towards the notion of freedom which is expressed in mutual recognition.

Natural consciousness takes up the attitude of perception in Lordship and Bondage, regarding independence as a *property* of self-consciousness which can be separated from its essential being, and which it therefore may or may not possess. However, since it defines itself as independent it *must* possess this property which is not essentially its own, and it therefore sets out to appropriate it. In the Philosophy of Right, Hegel shows his scorn for this attitude, if it is taken one-sidedly to be true, saying that all justifications of slavery

"depend upon regarding man as a natural entity pure and simple, an existent not in conformity with its concept ... The argument for the absolute injustice of slavery, on the other hand adheres to the concept of man as Spirit, as something inherently free". (Philosophy of Right, p. 48 §57).

The point here however is to demonstrate this inherent freedom to natural consciousness which takes freedom only as independence and as a property which is only accidentally, not inherently part of self-consciousness.

28. Propaedeutic, p.78, Philosophy of Mind, p. 176 §436.

29. Phenomenology, p.112:



To begin with, natural consciousness reacts to the independence of its object by seeking its death - appropriately, since "the object in its immediacy is here determined as Life".<sup>30</sup> Its death wish against the other also has an opposite significance for itself, for it cannot seek the death of the other without risking its own life, or without courage. This courage proves that it holds its own life to be of less value than its independence, and shows that it is free in the platonic sense of "fearing slavery more than death".<sup>31</sup> Through its courage it therefore experiences not only that it is independent of other self-consciousness, but also that as Spirit it is independent of nature in general and of the natural form of itself in particular, that is, Life. This dual sense of independence as independence of nature and of other self-conscious beings recurs often in the Phenomenology.

However, if one self-consciousness actually succeeds in killing another, it does not achieve what it originally wanted, which was recognition of its own independence.

"Death certainly shows that each staked his life and held it to be of no account, both in himself and in the other; but that is not for those who survived this struggle". (Phenomenology, p.114).

The survivor negates the other's independence, but does not succeed in possessing it, and learns thereby that its independence is essentially related to its Life, or that "life is as essential to it as pure self-consciousness".<sup>32</sup> We can also arrive at this conclusion through the

30. Phenomenology, p.113.

31. Republic, 387b; Cornford, op.cit. p. 75.

32. Phenomenology, p. 115.

following reasoning - though Hegel does not give it directly.<sup>33</sup> The fight to the death is not to be regarded as a natural occurrence, but as a fight which is essentially a fight for recognition of independence. Independence must be at stake in the fight for it to have the value Hegel imputes to it. If the fight is courageous, in other words, rather than merely reckless, it must be courageous in face of a perceived danger, that is of losing its independence through losing the fight. In other words, though its courage reveals its spiritual nature, it equally reveals to it that in order to be spiritual it must be alive, and during the fight it experiences the absolute terror of its own death - rather than the lesser fear of some pain which we might impute to an animalistic natural fight, which would not be a true display of courage. The result is the same: life is essential to self-consciousness.

With this experience, it is possible to see how a fight for recognition can result not in a murder, but a submission. Natural consciousness discovers for itself that its aim is not the death of the other, but recognition; and once fear is intuited as fear of death and hence loss of independence in the form of life, it makes sense for the party which achieves this intuition to submit and to recognise the other. The submission thus divides self-consciousness into two distinct beings. The first being, which is simply recognised, is the pure self-consciousness, self-consciousness in itself, and corresponds to Fichtes 'I am I'; and the second being which has understood the value of independence in the objective form of life, is self-consciousness for another, or "consciousness in the form of thinghood".

33. He does, however, return to the distinction made below, between mere fear[*Angst*] and absolute terror[*Absolute Furchst*]- incidentally reversing the senses in which *Angst* and *Furchst* were later used by existentialism. (Phenomenology, p.119, Sartre, op. cit. p. 29 ff).

"The former is Lord, the other is bondsman".<sup>34</sup>

We may note that lordship and bondage is a necessary result of this fight, in virtue of what is at stake in the fight. This is the principle of the independence of self-consciousness. The slave is the one who has agreed to give up a claim to this independence for himself, and admitted that he is tied to natural existence. He acknowledges in his submission the pure independence of the master, who is above material things. However, this acknowledgement is not at all specific, since nothing specific was at stake in the fight. He does not recognise any particular virtue in his master, but only his abstract independence. It is not a verbal recognition, but a practical one, and the slave recognises the independence of the master precisely through carrying out his desire, since his independence is the independence of self-consciousness, and self-consciousness is in general desire. As Aristotle said, a man "is master not in acquiring slaves, but in using them".<sup>35</sup> The submission in this fight, then, is not the submission which lets the loser go free again, not the surrender of modern warfare which ships the defeated army home, but the absolute submission of the will<sup>36</sup> of one to the other, in return only for the life of the one; and to surrender in warfare in ancient times was in general to become a slave.

34 Phenomenology, p.115. I have spent some time showing how the experience of recognition for natural consciousness itself leads directly and necessarily to the notion of mastery and slavery partly in order to contradict Kojève's interpretation, which holds mastery and slavery to be the result of indeducible, contingent events, for which there can be and in Hegel's view is no explanation (Kojève, op. cit., p.43n).

35. Aristotle, Politics, bk.1, Ch 7; Penguin 1962 p.37. In Kojève's account work and recognition are only accidentally related, through an 'also', not a 'must'. "The Master who was able to force the Slave to *recognise* him as Master, can also force the slave to *work* for him, to yield the result of his *action* to him." (op. cit. p.46)

36. More strictly, 'desire': the concrete will belongs to reason, and the will of self-consciousness is only desire which is aware of itself.

In the relationship of lordship and bondage, it appears at first that the master has achieved everything he wanted. He has made the independence of the other into his own property. This guarantees his own independence in two senses. Firstly, while as we saw earlier the object of desire presents itself in two aspects, one of which is independent and the other which is dependent on the desire of self-consciousness, now the master has only to concern himself with its dependent aspect, and he leaves the aspect of its independence to the slave. The slave, in other words, has to work, while the master is free to consume and to enjoy. Secondly, the master is independent not only of nature but also of the other self-consciousness, since the other has defined himself as dependent and thinglike, recognising the autonomy only of the master and ceasing therefore to pose any threat to him. Further, as Hegel points out, these two aspects are not separate from each other but complement each other, each being necessary to the other. It is because the master has shown himself to be free of thinghood that the slave, who is bound to things, is bound to the master: and it is because of the work of the slave that the master is free of things.<sup>37</sup>

However, if the master thus appears as victor and the slave as vanquished, Hegel goes on to point out in a famous twist that on closer examination the situation is not so simple as it seemed. The master is free through recognition, but the slave who recognises him is no longer independent, and what the master sought was the recognition of an independent being.

37. Phenomenology, p. 115f.

"But for recognition proper the moment is lacking, that what the Lord does to the other he also do to himself, and that what the bondsman does to himself he should also do to the other. The outcome is a recognition that is one-sided and unequal". (Phenomenology, p.116).

The master thus finds from his own experience that he has failed to achieve the result he originally wanted. In regarding independence as a property of self-consciousness he succeeded in possessing it, but just in possessing it it loses its essential characteristic, that is independence.<sup>38</sup> If self-consciousness were only accidentally free, then natural consciousness could indeed have been satisfied with possessing freedom, taking it away from another: but if self-consciousness is essentially free then it cannot be satisfied with this. In demonstrating that the master cannot be satisfied, Hegel has demonstrated to him in his own terms that self-consciousness is indeed essentially free. The master cannot be satisfied, because he sought independence, but the truth is that he is not only dependent upon the recognition of the other - for he cannot be a master without a slave - but also that this other who defines him or is his "truth" is itself the unessential consciousness and its unessential action".<sup>39</sup>

If we turn instead to the other side of this relationship, we will find that the slave who appears to be absolute loser in fact gains a good deal from the relationship. The master was free of nature and of the

38. We may remark that insofar as slavery exists as an institution in the ancient world, freedom has this characteristic of being something one either does or does not possess. Freedom in general is not an issue: one is born free or born a slave, and only in exceptional circumstances such as war does one's freedom become challenged. (cf Aristotle, Politics, Bk I)

39. Phenomenology, p.117.

slave, while the slave is essentially relative to the master, recognising him, and to nature, upon which he works. However, although in so far as in these relationships he is not independent but relative, there is nevertheless an aspect of freedom which may be found within them which is more concrete than the pure abstraction of freedom which is achieved by the master. The slave works, and work transforms the natural world and shapes it in accordance with a preconceived idea, which demonstrates that the natural world has an aspect which depends upon consciousness, that is, form. Further, in work, the slave confronts desire, and rather than allowing it as a natural necessity to determine him, he holds it in check and acts independently of it.

If this gives the slave a certain independence of nature, he also gains a certain independence through his fear of the master, and in fact it is only taken together with this fear that work can have the liberating significance we have just mentioned.<sup>40</sup> The fear of the master is, as we have already said, not merely the fear of pain but the fear of death, which means the loss of independence which is what was at stake in the fight.

"In that experience it [the slave] has been quite unmanned, has trembled in every fibre of its being, and everything solid and stable has been shaken to its foundations. But this pure universal movement, the absolute melting-away of everything stable, is the simple essential nature of self-consciousness, absolute negativity, pure *being for self* which consequently is *implicit* in this consciousness". (Phenomenology, p.117)

Further, this absolute negativity is not only implicit in the slave, but also exists for him as an object, that is as the master.

40. Phenomenology, p. 119.



Because through fear freedom is both implicitly and explicitly an issue for the slave, it is possible for his work to lead him to experience his freedom from nature, since as he may approach his work with the question of his freedom in mind, and find the answer that work "sets at naught" the alien being before which he had earlier trembled. The answer only comes, however, to one who asks the question.

"If consciousness fashions the thing without that initial absolute fear, it is only a self-centred attitude; for its form or negativity is not negativity *per se*, and therefore its formative activity cannot give it consciousness of essential being". (Phenomenology, p.119) 41.

Having a mind of one's own is, as Hegel goes on to point out, merely self-will, not freedom.<sup>42</sup> Discipline is also an essential moment of freedom.

"Without the discipline of service and obedience, fear remains at the formal stage, and does not extend to the known real world of existence". (*ibid*).

For the slave's experience of liberation then, fear, discipline, and work are all equally essential.

However, in so far as self-consciousness remains within the limits of the attitude of dependence and independence of self-consciousness, regarding these as properties, the liberation which both master and slave

41. When Marx, in a well known passage from Capital (op. cit. p.174) says that "what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality", he is presumably drawing on his reading of Hegel. We should note, however, that in Marx's account labour is human only because it has a conception of form, and that this leaves out the essential and peculiarly Hegelian dimension that this form should be subjectively realized - that is, the dimension of freedom.

42. Hegel uses a pun: *Der eigene Sinn ist Eigensinn*, "self-will is stubborn capriciousness", opposing this to the freedom achieved through discipline. (cf. Philosophy of History, p. 41)

achieve is limited also to independence, and is not a true freedom. The master, as Kojève argued, is in an "existential *impasse*",<sup>43</sup> achieving only at best a pure independence, but cut off by definition from the liberating experience of the work of the slave. However, the slave too is in a sense in an *impasse*. That is, his work may give him an idea of independence, but in so far as he is limited to slavery it will not produce freedom. We may note in this connection that where as slavery is an absolute institution, in classical Greece, for example, (but not in the Macedonian and late Roman empires, where it has lost its absolute quality) no freedom at all seems to have been credited to the slave. That the slave's work is held to have no liberating value may be seen in the fact that Greek art, which was often produced by slaves, is not held in any sense to be an expression of the free individuality of the artist, though it may express in a general and rather irrelevant sense his capability.<sup>44</sup> Similarly there seems little evidence that slaves in general greatly resented their lack of liberty, though they may certainly, as in the case of the Thracian mining slaves, have resented their abuse; while this indifference does not seem to be characteristic of Roman life.

However, although in this sense the division of self-consciousness into master and slave is an *impasse*, it does not follow that Spirit is stuck with this *impasse* until some external force injects an input which upsets it.<sup>45</sup> In fact both master and slave have learned from the experience

43. Kojève op. cit. p.46.

44. cf. note 38 to this chapter

45. In Kojève's account this is Alexander the Great's foundation of empire in which the distinction of master and slave is blurred, since captives in battle were not necessarily enslaved but made into members of a higher political unit, the cosmopolis (see Leo Strauss , op.cit. p.181 ff).

of their self-analysis, and what they have learned is that independence is not a property of consciousness but is a universal which applies equally and necessary to all self-consciousness, or is unconditioned. Far from being stuck, it has discovered within itself the principle which makes self-consciousness truly free, not merely independent, and in doing so it ceases to force self-consciousness to the extremes of mastery and slavery and instead allows free thought to mediate between these two extremes. It discovers, in other words, that recognition may be of something specific, which is a thought, some idea of virtue or vice, some criticism; that is, it has discovered "mutual recognition". In doing so, however, it has gone beyond the limitations which defined the attitude Lordship and Bondage, and defined a new attitude which Hegel goes on to discuss. Before we go on to consider this attitude, we will consider an issue of interpretation which often arises in connection with Lordship and Bondage: that is, to what extent is it intended to be historical?

There can be no doubt that Hegel's discussion has and is intended to have some historical relevance. We have already drawn some parallels to the Hellenic period. In the following section the historical references are clearer; to Stoicism and Scepticism, which relate to the Roman world; and to the Unhappy Consciousness, which seems to refer more to the catholicism of the middle ages. The question we must pose is whether Hegel intends his account of self-consciousness not simply to relate to or to illuminate certain phenomena which appear in certain historical epochs, but rather to function more strongly as an explanation of these phenomena. Is self-consciousness itself a kind of potted account of history?

Kojève's answer to this question is an unequivocal 'Yes'. In his account, as we have seen, desire and life are held to be 'biological', that is as part of a kind of state of nature. The fight also is something which occurs in a state of nature (we may add that in so far as it may actually occur as presented by Hegel, Hegel agrees).<sup>46</sup> In so far as the fight results in Lordship and Bondage, it has the significance of an original contract which founds not so much political life, but society in general.<sup>47</sup> Lordship and Bondage then becomes an account of the Greek world, which is the age of the dominance of the master. This stage is not itself historical, because the master is in Kojève's view "satisfied", and therefore does not have any interest in changing the world. Freedom of Self-Consciousness then describes the Judao-Christian world, which is dominated by the liberated slave, and it is historical because of the work of the slave which historically transforms the natural world and creates a new, original, artificial human world. The slave then is the cause of history, "the source of all human, social, historical progress".<sup>48</sup> History is essentially an artefact, something which is freely created by the negating activity

46. Philosophy of Spirit, p.173 §432. In the Propadeutic, Hegel also suggests that his account works only in total isolation from society by referring not to historical examples of slavery, but to Robinson Crusoe and Friday, (Propadeutic, p. 77)

47. It thus has the same significance as the "killing of the primal father", Freud's version of Lordship and Bondage, of founding Civilisation (See Freud, Totem and Taboo). In political theory the social contract is generally the foundation of the state in particular rather than society or civilization in general, though it may be disputed to what extent this is the case in particular authors. Kojève does not talk explicitly of a state of nature, but of "Societies that are dominated by Desire anterior to the Fight for recognition: primitive societies and ancient Egypt" (Op. cit. p.283)

48. Kojève op.cit. p.22.

which originated in slavery. This history, in Kojève's view comes to an end when the slave finally and fully emancipates himself in the universal and homogeneous state which either has been or will be<sup>49</sup> founded at the end of history, in which all men are equally free. Lordship and Bondage thus becomes what has been called a 'big bang theory of history', an original explosion which sets the whole thing in motion, and which will eventually subside, and calm and order again be restored.

There are a number of reasons why we must reject this type of interpretation. To begin with, there are purely exegetical questions. If Hegel means his historical allusions to be taken so seriously, then why does he always leave them so vague, and almost always avoid any proper names?<sup>50</sup> Why in the Philosophy of History does he barely mention slavery in connection with ancient Greece, and why does the idea of creative work play such a small role? And why is it that in the Philosophy of Right Hegel describes a state which is by no means universal and classless, but on the contrary quite sharply and definitely divided into specific *Stände*?<sup>51</sup> If Hegel has in fact changed his position with age and lost

49. Kojève's equivocation appears to be a result of attempting to reconcile the Marxist notion that a classless state ought to be established with Hegel's view that the ideal state already exists and was founded by Napoleon. He apparently moves away from the Marxist view later, as may be evidenced by his famous footnote to the second edition of his book (op.cit. p. 159ff).

50. Kelly, Notes on Hegel's "Lordship and Bondage", in A. MacIntyre (ed.) Hegel, p.200. This essay is largely a criticism of Kojève. Q. Lauer also in his Reading of Hegel's Phenomenology, Fordham U.P. 1976, pp.100-112 also usefully criticises Kojève's reading of Hegel.

51. On the question of whether Hegel's views in the Phenomenology are consistent with those in the Philosophy of Right see Hyppolite, op. cit. pp. 326-330.

some youthful insight, why does he not acknowledge his change of view? We need not rely on such evidence, however. Let us consider the way Hegel relates self-consciousness to history in the following passage, which is the most specific and arguably the only clearly historical reference Hegel makes in "Self-Consciousness."

"As a universal form of the World-Spirit, Stoicism could only appear on the scene in a time of universal fear and bondage, but also at a time of universal culture which had raised itself to the level of thought". (Phenomenology, p. 121) 52

Firstly, we may note, this formulation does not suggest that the historical situation is in any way caused by the development of self-consciousness into Stoicism, but rather suggests the opposite, that the historical development is independent of the development of self-consciousness, and merely allows Stoicism to appear. More importantly, though, we should observe that Stoicism is not held to exist only in the Roman Empire, but to have become a "universal form of the World-Spirit" at that time. This does not imply that it does not exist in other cultures. Since Stoicism is defined by Hegel as thought, to assert this would amount to saying that in other cultures which do not include stoicism, there is no thought. Now, it is true that in lordship and bondage there is no thought, but it is also true that neither Greek society, nor any other example of Spirit is capable of existing without thought. Lordship and bondage can avoid thought only by abstracting away from Spirit, and its experience referred it back from this abstraction to a recognition of thought. In so far as Greek culture does not involve Stoicism, then, we must conclude not that

52. Hegel means in the Roman Empire: see Phenomenology, p. 290, and Philosophy of History, p. 278ff.



thought itself is absent, but that in Greece, Spirit did not yet know itself self-consciously as thought. Here, as always with Hegel, the experience of Spirit is not a generation of a new object, but the discovery of one which existed but which was not known by Spirit to be part of its essence.

In the Philosophy of History, therefore, Hegel characterises history as a development not of freedom but of the knowledge of freedom, or of subjective freedom, (since freedom which knows itself as such is subjective).<sup>53</sup>

"The history of the World is the discipline of the uncontrolled natural will, bringing it into obedience to a Universal principle and conferring subjective freedom. The East knew and to the present day knows only that *One* is Free; the Greek and Roman world, that *some* are free; the German world knows that *All* are free." (Philosophy of History, p.104)

- or knows "that it is the *freedom* of Spirit which constitutes its essence", as Hegel put it in the same context earlier in that work.<sup>54</sup>

It is true that the development of the knowledge of freedom is equally a real development of subjective freedom. Kojève, however, sees freedom only as subjective freedom and therefore sees freedom as something created, rather than something merely discovered, which is Hegel's view. In Hegel's view, then, it is possible for different aspects of self-consciousness to be put in question and therefore revealed to knowledge in different historical epochs, but not that self-consciousness in any of its partial

53. Subjective and substantial freedom are discussed in Ch. 7 below.

54. Philosophy of History, p. 18.

forms may exist on its own in any epoch. A Greek slave may lack a subjective knowledge of certain essential elements of self-consciousness. As Aristotle comments, for example, a slave "participates in the reasoning faculty so far as to understand but not so as to possess it".<sup>55</sup> All the faculties of mind are present in the slave, but he is not subjectively aware of them all. If Hegel is right, it must be possible to demonstrate that all the moments of self-consciousness are present in any self-consciousness, and not just in one which knows itself to be self-conscious, or which has 'liberated' itself. In this sense, if the analysis of Lordship and Bondage is not wrong, it should be possible to find its elements in any individual historical period. It is only subsequently and subordinately that it may take an historical form as a "universal form of World Spirit", and this form relates to its knowledge, not its existence.

There is a sense, then, in which freedom, or rather knowledge of freedom, causes history. However, even if we accept a more moderate form of Kojève's view, that freedom is known (or discovered, realized, or recollected) in history, but not generated by it, we should note that the fact remains that this freedom is not identical with self-consciousness. On the contrary, it is freedom in the fullest sense of Spirit, the freedom of existing Reason, or of God. Hegel summarises his position by saying that Reason (which in the sense used here is identical with Spirit) explains history not in the manner of Understanding, but rationally in accordance

55. Aristotle, Politics, Bk I, Ch 4, op.cit. p.34. Similarly in Plato's Meno, Meno's slave under the guidance of a free man (Socrates) is capable of producing (or 'recollecting') a mathematical proof, but is unable to do so alone.

with Aristotle's theory of causality.

"Reason - and this term may suffice us here, without investigating the relation sustained by the Universe to the Divine Being - is *Substance* as well as *Infinite Power*; its own *Infinite Material* underlying all the natural and spiritual life which it originates, as also the *Infinite Form* - that which sets this material in motion (Philosophy of History, p.97)

The terms Hegel italicises in this passage correspond to Aristotle's final, efficient, material, and formal causes respectively, and in each sense divine Reason, not mere self-consciousness, is the cause of history.<sup>56</sup>

It is concrete freedom, therefore, not the abstract freedom of self-consciousness which causes history. At the level of self-consciousness the notion of freedom always remains abstract, and this abstraction can be expressed by saying that freedom for self-consciousness takes the form of contingency. Consequently, in Kojève's view, history is a "free contingent process". It is simply a series of free actions of free individuals, and it has no overall sense or meaning, other than the emancipation of slaves, the rectification of the original sin of slavery which started the whole thing off in the first place.

If this is history, it is so only in a weak sense of the word. Sartre, following a similar line of reasoning to Kojève's prefers to deny the notion of history and to assert instead that man is only temporal.<sup>57</sup> That is, since he is free, he is condemned to live in terms of a past which is the objectification or solidification of past free actions, and of a future

56. See G.D.O'Brien, Hegel on Reason and History, University of Chicago Press 1975, esp. p.44f.

57. Sartre, op. cit. p.107ff and p. 233ff.

which he will freely make. The past has the significance of 'facticity'. It exists in objective form and it is in relation to it that I must assert my freedom. However, there is no reason that the past should take the form it does, and there can be no such reason since it is the result of free actions. There can be no lessons of history since history has no meaning, and any attempt to give history a meaning is in Sartre's view an attempt to deny man's original freedom by suggesting a predetermined pattern for his actions.

It may be suggested that Kojève and Sartre arrive at their differing interpretations of the significance of history through differing interpretations of Hegel, and especially of Lordship and Bondage. Sartre's exegesis concentrates on the master, and Kojève locates the source of history not in the master but in the creative work of the slave. However, it is more important to note that Kojève and Sartre share in common the idea that the past has the significance only of being an externalisation of something essentially subjective, and that all past actions have meaning only in relation to this subject. The subject, in other words, is absolute.

Hegel does not exactly disagree, insofar as History is certainly from one period of view, an externalisation, and from this point of view it is indeed a "free contingent process". At the end of the chapter on Absolute Knowledge he says

"This sacrifice is the externalisation in which Spirit displays the process of its becoming Spirit in the form of a *free contingent happening*, intuiting its pure self as Time outside of it, and equally its Being as Space". (Phenomenology, p. 492)

However, as Hegel goes on to explain in the paragraph following the one just quoted, history is equally an internalisation or recollection. From

this point of view it loses the characteristic of mere contingency which it had for natural consciousness, and takes on the significance of being a discovery of the true substance of Spirit. This discovery cannot be made by natural consciousness without the help of the phenomenal knowledge of the philosopher who recognises the Absolute and therefore grasps not only *Entausserung* but also *Erinnerung*.

History is therefore in Hegel's view neither reducible to the subject, in which case it would be contingent, nor to substance, in which case it would be predetermined. Instead, it is neither of these things, but also both of them: it is an entity which has a meaning. This concurs with the ordinary view that history is worth studying, which view may be contrasted to the general views of both existentialism and Marxism which would lead one to the conclusion that it is not; in the former case because there is little to learn from it, and in the latter case because the general course of history can be known in advance of empirical study.<sup>58</sup>

Hegel's lectures on the Philosophy of History set out to establish the value of the study of history in this way. However, to follow his argument in any more detail would be beyond the scope of this work, and we should rather return to Freedom of Self-Consciousness.

58. This is admittedly a generalisation, and certainly in the case of Marx himself it may be admitted to be a misleading one. Although in such works as the 1859 Preface to the Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, Marx appears to uphold this crude view, it is clear from the chapters on "Primitive Accumulation" in Capital that he does not hold that history is simply predetermined. (See e.g. Capital Vol I op.cit. p.551, p.668, p. 714).

## (d) Freedom of Self-Consciousness

In Freedom of Self-Consciousness, self-consciousness transcends the mere independence of Lordship and Bondage towards freedom; and it does this through mutual recognition or recognition in thought. This gives a freedom which is real, but which at the same time is limited. That is, it gives a freedom which exists 'socially', but not yet 'politically'. In recognising freedom to be a universal property of self-consciousness, self-consciousness becomes essentially social and therefore more real. Society, however, is merely an aggregation of individuals. The individuals are separate components and society is relative to and dependent upon them. In the view of social contract theory this is also true of the state, but in Hegel's view the state is a real existence which cannot be reduced to the individual. Since "the idea of freedom is genuinely actual only as the state", <sup>59</sup> social freedom is not yet true freedom, and the freedom of self-consciousness is always limited by its individualism and by the conceit that nothing is greater or more powerful than itself. In particular it does not recognise the independent existence of the state, and sees it only as something relative to itself, a hinderance or a convenience, but not a real individual being worthy of respect. In the Philosophy of History Hegel writes

"The perpetually recurring misapprehension of Freedom consists in regarding that term only in its *formal* subjective sense, abstracted from its essential objects and aims; thus a constraint put on impulse, desire, passion - pertaining to the particular individual as such - a limitation of caprice and self-will [*Eigensinn*] is regarded as a fettering of Freedom. We should on

59. Philosophy of Right, p. 48, §57.



the contrary look upon such limitations as the indispensable proviso of emancipation. Society and the state are the very conditions in which Freedom is realized". (Philosophy of History p.41).

In Freedom of Self-Consciousness, self-consciousness achieves the discipline of recognising that others are also essentially free, the discipline of society; but does not yet recognise the independence of the state, and by failing thereby self-consciously to accept the discipline of the state, it fails to achieve freedom in its fullest or concrete sense.

If we take Freedom of Self-Consciousness as a whole, we may say that in it mutual recognition is achieved through the mediation of recognition by thought. This allows recognition to be recognition not merely of the abstract will, but of specific virtues. Recognition becomes real or mutual through including the negative moment of criticism, which is itself a result of the experience that the other is essentially free.

"Universal self-consciousness ... - is the form of consciousness which lies at the roof of all true mental or spiritual life - in family, fatherland, state, and of all virtues, love, friendship, valour, honour, fame." (Philosophy of Mind, p. 176, 436) 60

Through the mediation of thought, then, recognition becomes recognition of a specific content, and this content may be expressed as virtue.

In the Phenomenology, however, Hegel does not present Freedom of Self-Consciousness as a whole, but instead divides it up into three distinct moments, Stoicism, Scepticism, and Unhappy Consciousness. Mutual recognition is achieved only through each of these movements taken together as a whole. In Stoicism, self-consciousness achieves only the most abstract

dimension of mutual recognition. That is, it recognises all self-consciousness, "whether on the throne or in chains",<sup>61</sup> to be free in its own thought, but not necessarily in reality. Scepticism turns away from this freedom in thought only, and, mocking its seriousness, turns away from the self and sets out to realise freedom in relation to otherness, by taking up "a negative attitude towards otherness, to desire and work".

Stoicism and Scepticism between them oscillate between the view that thought is the home of true necessity, and that it is purely contingent. It is only in the move to the Unhappy Consciousness, which corresponds to the move to the supersensible world in Understanding, that thought becomes capable of a specific content. This content then becomes the Unchangeable; and although this is not the same as God, it is nevertheless found as a dimension of religion.<sup>62</sup> The unchangeable is the true and positive content of virtue which make possible a concrete mutual recognition. This content, however, is for Unhappy Consciousness an object, and this means that self-consciousness has reverted to the standpoint of consciousness. In the final movement of Unhappy Consciousness, which corresponds to the introduction of the second supersensible world in understanding, and to the move from catholicism to protestantism, self-consciousness reintroduces the principle of its own freedom in to the objective Unchangeable world.<sup>63</sup> This means however, that its object is an object of conscious-

61. Phenomenology, p. 121: This may be taken as a reference to two famous Stoa, the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, and the slave Epictetus.

62. Hegel discusses religion in its own right within the Phenomenology only in the chapter on 'Religion'. As he sometimes stresses himself (eg. Phenomenology, p. 322), although Unhappy Consciousness and Faith are clearly dimensions of a religious attitude, they are not themselves religion, and we should therefore take them as they are. We should neither look for an account of religion as a whole within them, nor neglect that they may occur as attitudes which are not self-consciously religious - for example in political faith.

63. Phenomenology, p. 137

ness which is also recognised to be self-consciousness, and this means that self-consciousness has become Reason.

I do not propose to follow the experience of free or universal self-consciousness in any further detail here. However, before going on to consider Reason there are two points of interpretation I want to raise.

The first of these is relatively minor. It concerns the transition from Lordship and Bondage to Freedom of Self-Consciousness. What is it in the experience of the former which refers to the latter? Commonly it is held to be the creative value of the slave's labour which leads to universal self-consciousness. Hyppolite for example, writes of "the universal form of self-consciousness which has gradually appeared in human labour".<sup>64</sup> Interpretations such as this are so widespread that we may call this a traditional interpretation of Hegel's view. However, there is in Hegel no explicit connection between universal self-consciousness and work, nor any suggestion that it should gradually appear.

In fact, in Hegel's view, nothing which is universal may gradually appear, since the universal is infinite, but if it is held to appear gradually it is thereby related to something finite or appears not as a necessary universal but a mere generalisation from experience. Universal self-consciousness is strictly incompatible with slavery, since it is defined by the view that not some but all self-consciousness<sup>-es</sup> are free, or that freedom is an unconditionally universal characteristic of self-consciousness. The experience

64. Hyppolite, op. cit. p.190.

of Lordship and Bondage reveals this by showing to both master and slave that both are essentially free beings. This means that freedom cannot be a property specifically of either, so that the attitude which led to Lordship and Bondage must be abandoned.

We may in other words force natural consciousness in its own terms to abandon a domineering attitude and recognise instead the essential freedom of self-consciousness. Subsequently we may choose to ask how this experience may appear in a society based upon slavery, such as the Greek *polis*. However, from the point of view of self-consciousness alone we will be unable to answer. Though the slave's work may prove his independence to us, he remains in fact a slave, and no amount of work can alter the fact that in the eyes of his master and his society he is not a free man. Similarly, the master may be free in the most abstract sense of all, being a "pure self-consciousness", but so long as he remains master he may not realise this freedom through action, since even if he may work, he has (unlike the slave) no reason to question his independence from nature, and no need to prove it through work. Neither master nor slave, then, can be postulated as historical cause of the emergence as a "universal form of World Spirit" of the principle of free self-consciousness, and if any explanation is to be given it must be offered on the level of Spirit, taking into account historical, political, religious, and other considerations, and not merely those of self-consciousness.

The second point of interpretation I want to raise is arguably more substantial. It concerns the question of exactly what Hegel means by universal or free self-consciousness and by mutual recognition. We may consider first Sartre's interpretation, which sees mutual recognition as a solution to the domineering attitude of Lordship and Bondage, and then argues that

Hegel is being optimistic in suggesting that the domineering attitude can in fact be overcome. Instead, he argues, we should accept that self-consciousness is always domineering or 'imperialistic' and this attitude can never be reconciled in a mutual recognition which respects the freedom of the other because the other is necessarily a threat to my own freedom and I must therefore always seek to dominate him.<sup>65</sup>

However, Sartre misinterprets Hegel's meaning. His specific mistake is to identify mutual recognition only with the most abstract principle of stoical individualism, the idea of universal self-consciousness. In mutual recognition, he says,

"there will appear a self-consciousness in general which is recognised in other self-consciousnesses and which is identical with them and with itself". (Sartre, op. cit. p.237)

Mutual recognition, then, consists simply in recognising that others like myself are self-conscious and in that sense free. Sartre then objects that in the relation of recognition it is not possible for both sides to be free. Either I acknowledge the other and do as he wishes, or he recognises me and does what I want. I may transcend Lordship and Bondage to the point of recognising his freedom, but in Sartre's view this move is still more important that I assert my dominance over the other.

As an expression of Sartre's own view, which is based upon the absolute character of the ego,<sup>66</sup> or the primacy of existence over essence,<sup>67</sup> this is

65. Sartre, op. cit. pp. 235-244: cf also Hyppolite, op. cit. p.324n

66. Sartre, op. cit, p. xxxii.

67. Sartre, op. cit. p. xxxix, p. 25, and Sartre, Existentialism and Humanism, Methuen 1948, p. 26

not unreasonable. However, as a criticism of Hegel it is erroneous. It misses out in particular the dimension of mutual recognition contributed by Unhappy Consciousness, that is, the dimension which brings to recognition a concrete content. Mutual recognition for Hegel is not simply the abstract recognition that all are free. This recognition does indeed take it away from Lordship and Bondage, but mutual recognition proper involves specific recognition of concrete characteristics of others. Hegel does not assert that in this recognition self-consciousness ceases to be domineering, but only that its domineering activity has the more positive value of being a communication of things which self-consciousness takes to be valuable, that is of virtue.

Mutual recognition therefore involves specific ethical ideas. However, as Hegel pointed out in his essay on Natural Law, if these ethical ideas are interpreted simply as subjective ideas which self-consciousnesses attempt to impose on each other, or as 'relations of power', then they are self-cancelling.<sup>68</sup> What is ethical is simply the idea which succeeds in dominating, and this is not an ethical idea at all. This is more or less Sartre's position; that there is no ethical value.<sup>69</sup> Hegel rejects this, and the purpose of Unhappy Consciousness in the *Phenomenology* is to introduce self-consciousness to the idea of a concrete ethical value.

Many French commentators on Hegel have, presumably for this reason, seen fit to make not Lordship and Bondage, but the Unhappy Consciousness "the fundamental theme of the Phenomenology".<sup>70</sup> This then leads to an

68. Natural Law, op. cit., p. 88f.

69. See note 10 to this chapter.

70. Hyppolite op. cit. p. 190. See also Lauer op. cit. p. 121 ff. Jean Wahl's *Malheur de la Conscience dans la Philosophie de Hegel* has been influential in developing this interpretation.



interpretation of Self-Consciousness which is essentially theistic, in contrast to the atheistic approaches of Sartre and Kojève. It is accepted that in order for there to be any true communication between self-consciousnesses indeed any recognition of freedom, it is necessary that self-consciousnesses in general ascribe to a shared idea of humanity.<sup>71</sup> Recognition which involves thought or which is critical is not possible except on the basis of such an ideal, since criticism cannot be made except in the name of a shared ideal, that is, a virtue. The general notion of virtue, that is the good, becomes the Unchangeable of the Unhappy Consciousness, and this is more or less identified with God.<sup>72</sup>

This is certainly an advance on Sartre's position. However, it is as mistaken to take Unhappy Consciousness as the fundamental theme of the Phenomenology as it is to take Lordship and Bondage to be the focal point for the same reason: it is Spirit, not self-consciousness, which is for Hegel is the Absolute. The Unchangeable of Unhappy Consciousness is indeed an intuition of a moment of God, but Hegel nevertheless is careful never to make this connection explicit. There is for Hegel no way that the notion of God can be deduced from self-consciousness. Indeed, as he says repeatedly in the lesser Logic, He cannot be deduced at all.<sup>73</sup> The Unchangeable is simply an idea which can be revealed to the experience of self-consciousness, and which can be used to force it to abandon its self-centred attitude and move to the attitude of Reason, and thence to Spirit.

71 See eg. G. Bataille, "*Sur Nietzsche*". *Oeuvres Complètes*, Gallimard 1973, Vol. VI, esp. p. 42 and p. 48.

72. John Heckman's introduction to Hyppolite, op. cit., gives a useful general account of the various existentialist readings of Hegel.

73. Lesser Logic, p. 49, see also pp. 5, 17, 30, 39, 81.

Both theistic and atheistic versions of existentialism, then, regard the achievement or non achievement of mutual recognition as a major theme of and problem for the Phenomenology. In contrast to this we should assert that Hegel does not intend to force a choice between a godless world of domination and submission, and an alternative in which this antagonism is resolved into a happy and peaceful co operation through recognition of God. On the contrary, mutual recognition contains both of these aspects, and is higher than both abstractions. This may be expressed by saying that it is the "basis of all virtues, love, honour, bravery, all self-sacrifice, all fame, etc".<sup>74</sup> That is to say, it is neither domineering, nor co-operative, but essentially courageous. Equally it is not itself the whole of Spirit, but only one moment of it, and courage is only one of Spirit's four virtues. We should seek neither to overcome it, nor to make it dominant, but only to know it as it truly is, as an essential moment of Spirit.

74. Propadentic, p.78.

## CHAPTER SIX : Reason

## (a) Reason and Rationalism

Reason is the third and final moment of subjective Spirit. Exactly what Hegel means by Reason, however, is not immediately clear. He does not seem to use the term in any special technical sense, and his description of Reason as "the faculty of the Unconditioned"<sup>1</sup> is both straightforward and orthodox. However, under the heading of Reason in the Phenomenology Hegel includes a number of attitudes - such as the pseudo-sciences of physiognomy and phrenology - which are not obvious or conventional examples of reasonable thinking. We should begin therefore by examining Hegel's definition<sup>2</sup> of Reason and asking exactly what attitudes it embraces.

Reason, as has already been said, is a unity of consciousness and self-consciousness.

"The grades of this elevation of certainty to truth [i.e. Phenomenology] are three in number: first (a) consciousness in general, with an object set against it; (b) self-consciousness, for which *ego* is the object; (c) unity of consciousness and self-consciousness, where the mind sees itself embodied in the object and sees itself implicitly and explicitly determinate as Reason, the notion of Spirit". (Philosophy of Mind, p.157 §417).

As Hegel goes on to explain in the *Zusatz* to this paragraph, this unity of consciousness and self-consciousness is not to be taken simply as a

1. Lesser Logic, p.72, §45.
2. Hegel, of course, will not attempt to impose a definition on natural consciousness, but only to describe what in his view Reason really is.

combination of two separate elements. On the contrary, Reason is the foundation of these elements, and they exist only as abstractions from Reason. Even as abstractions, they are in Hegel's view implicitly Reason: Reason however, is explicitly conscious and self-conscious. Thus, if we take an example of consciousness, it must be possible to demonstrate to it that it is implicitly Reason; but this will not be a simple process, and the Phenomenology, which sets out to do this, is not a simple book. If we take an example of Reason, however, it will be more directly evident that it is both conscious and self-conscious. If, for example, we consider the idea of judgement,<sup>3</sup> which is commonly taken to be an idea of Reason, it is clear that it contains both consciousness (of the object which I am judging) and self-consciousness (of my opinion in the matter). As Hegel said in one of his Jena aphorisms.

"Reason without understanding is nothing, but understanding in the absence of reason is still something". (quoted from Rosenkranz in Lukács, op. cit. p. 429).

Nevertheless, judgement cannot be reduced to these two moments, though they may be observed to be essentially part of it. In judging I do not simply apply my opinion to an object of consciousness: on the contrary, as Hegel demonstrated towards the end of his discussion of Understanding, in applying my opinion to the object I alter its essential character. It ceases to be a mere 'thing', an object of consciousness, and becomes instead something higher and more specific, for example a 'fact', and thus becomes essentially an object of Reason. It is in this sense that Reason is both greater than the sum of its parts, and autonomous in relation to them.

3. See lesser Logic, p.230ff, §166ff for Hegel's view of judgement.

Reason is first revealed to self-consciousness in the Phenomenology in the specific form of will. If self-consciousness is desire in general, it discovers reason in so far as it recognises not just desire, but the will of others, which will has the significance of being universal and essential.

The notion of will is introduced first as an alien will. Self-consciousness sought mutual recognition, but could not find it because its essential freedom did not allow it to be limited to a specific being which could be recognised. In the form of Unhappy Consciousness it sought to overcome this difficulty by recognising a specific Unchangeable being and sought to make this the essence of self-consciousness. It thus reverted to the position of consciousness and made itself into a thing. In this sense Unhappy Consciousness has much in common with the attitude of 'bad faith' in Sartre.<sup>4</sup>

In order to achieve this Unhappy Consciousness sets out to become simply an example of the universal Unchangeable being which it takes to be its essence. Since this universal being, if it is to be universal, cannot be the result of any subjective idea of Unhappy Consciousness, it places a mediator between it and the Unchangeable and allows the mediator to decide on its form. This structure may be seen especially in the Catholic Church, whose saints and priests mediate authoritatively between man and God. Hegel comments that through this structure Unhappy Consciousness

4. Bad faith, for Sartre, is the attempt to evade anguish by denying the freedom which causes it by making oneself into an objective being or what Sartre calls 'being-in-itself' - though this term has a different meaning for Sartre than for Hegel, signifying not potential being but unfree or thinglike being. See Sartre, Being and Nothingness, Part 1 Ch. 2.

is able entirely to rid itself of its freedom.

"Through these moments of surrender, first of its right to decide for itself, then of its property and enjoyment, and finally through the positive moment of practising what it does not understand, it truly and completely deprives itself of the consciousness of inner and outer freedom, of the actuality in which consciousness exists *for itself*. It has the certainty of having divested itself of its 'I' and of having turned its immediate self-consciousness into a *Thing*, into an *objective* existence". (Phenomenology, p.137).

However, this surrender of its own will is in Hegel's view equally a recognition of an objective will.

"For the surrender of one's own will is only from one aspect negative; in principle, however, or in itself, it is at the same time positive, viz. the positing of will as the will of an 'other', and specifically of will not as a particular, but as a universal will" (Phenomenology, p.138).

For Unhappy Consciousness the universal will retains its alien form. In the Philosophy of History Hegel comments that it was through the Reformation that the subjective principle of internalisation was returned to the notion of the Unchangeable.

"The Lutheran doctrine therefore involves the entire substance of Catholicism, with the exception of all that results from element of externality - as far as the Catholic Church insists upon that externality". (Philosophy of History, p. 415). 5

However, although the reference to the Reformation here is clear enough, it should not be overstated. We are not dealing with religion proper, but only Unhappy Consciousness, and it would not be appropriate to seek to resolve a theological issue at such an abstract grade of Spirit. The important point Hegel wishes to draw out of his discussion is only that

5. See also lesser Logic, p.10 and Philosophy of Right, p.12 for further comments on Luther whom Hegel of course admired greatly.



in the notion of a universal will we find a "unity of objectivity and being-for-self, which lies in the Notion of action",<sup>6</sup> an aspect of the self which is nevertheless (unlike desire) not attached to any particular self, but is objective. This leads Hegel to a conclusion which may be taken also as a definition of Reason:

"In this object, in which it finds that its own action and being as being that of this particular consciousness, are being and action in themselves, there has arisen for consciousness the idea of Reason, of the certainty that in its particular individuality it has being absolutely in itself or is all reality". (Phenomenology, p.138).

Reason in this definition becomes specified as idealism. The world of which it is conscious is not another world, as was the world of things for consciousness, but its own world, formed and conditioned by Reason itself. In a formulation which is crucial to the Hegelian notion of Reason, Hegel says

"Reason is the certainty of consciousness that it is all reality; thus does idealism express its Notion".  
(Phenomenology, p.140) <sup>7</sup>

Reason takes itself to be the being of its object: to him who looks rationally at the world, the world looks rationally back. While consciousness was distanced from its object, Reason is essentially involved in it.

For this reason, we may say that it is a universal and necessary characteristic of Reason that it is *interested*, while consciousness was paradigmatically disinterested and self-consciousness merely self-absorbed.<sup>8</sup>

6. Phenomenology, p.138.

7. The same formulation appears again two pages later. Phenomenology, p. 142.

8. Another way of putting this would be to say that Reason in general is "possessive". As was remarked above (note 20 to Chapter 4) Hegel expresses this in a pun, that Reason regards *Sein* as *sein* that is, being as its own.

"Reason now has a universal *interest* in the world, because it is certain of its presence in the world, or that the world present to it is rational" (Phenomenology, p. 146.)

This comment refers in particular to Observing Reason, but if we take the notion of interest in its broadest sense, we may say that it is always part of Reason, though sometimes in different senses of the word. Observation, then, is interested because unlike sensation, perception or understanding, it takes up a questioning attitude to objectivity, and it is naturally interested in the answers to its questions. A scientist, strictly, should regard the disproof of a hypothesis as being as valuable as its confirmation. An observer on the other hand is frankly delighted to discover in reality something which confirms an idea of its own (and the *Idea* is equally the property of Reason).<sup>8</sup> In leaving Observation and turning to what Hegel calls "The Actualisation of Rational Self-Consciousness through its own Activity", we find the notion of interest in a different sense. Here consciousness examines the interests which motivate it to act, that is, its self-interests. These are defined as pleasure, the law of the heart, and virtue. Finally, turning away from itself and back to the world, it discovers first of all *die Sache Selbst*,<sup>9</sup> that is those objective matters in which it has a

8. Lesser Logic, p. 72 §45.

9. This may reasonably be translated as "the fact itself". Most translators, however, presumably in order to stress Hegel's interpretation of "the fact" not, as may first seem to be the case, as something objective, but rather as something which essentially and actively involves the self-consciousness Ego - have used the more circumlocution translations "the heart of the matter" and "the matter in hand".

personal interest, and then through the difficulty of conflicting interests which this throws up, the idea of regulative law as a resolution of this conflict. The notion of interest, then, has three distinct but related meanings which correspond to the three different aspects of the object of consciousness.

Reason's idealism, however, can also have a negative aspect, which for Hegel is expressed especially in Critical philosophy. This takes the "abstract notion of Reason to be True"; and Hegel devotes some attention to a criticism of this subjective idealism in the opening section of his discussion of Reason, The Certainty and Truth of Reason - just as he criticised Fichtes 'I am I' in the opening section of self-consciousness, The Truth of Self-Certainty. His criticism is essentially the same as his general criticism of Kantian philosophy which we saw in Chapter Three; that it takes up the standpoint of consciousness only. Instead of bringing together the unity of apperception and the diversity of sensations,

"... it shifts from one to the other, and is caught up in the spurious,<sup>10</sup> i.e. the sensuous, infinite. Since Reason is all reality in the sense of the abstract 'mine' and the 'other' is for it something indifferent and extraneous, what is here made explicit is the kind of knowing of an 'other' by Reason, which we met with in the form of 'meaning', 'perceiving', and the 'Understanding', which apprehends what is 'meant' and what is 'perceived'." (Phenomenology, p. 144).

Viewed from this standpoint of consciousness only, however, Reason is contradictory.

"It is involved in a direct contradiction; it asserts essence to be a duality of opposed factors, the *unity of apperception* and equally a *Thing*. (Phenomenology, p.145).

10. "*Schlechte*": this is Hegel's 'bad infinity'.

This contradiction is perhaps most evident in the attitude of Critical philosophy to the freedom of Reason. On the one hand, Reason as the faculty of the unconditioned is free, because unlike the Understanding it is not limited by an object. On the other hand, although Reason is subjective, it is equally viewed as an objective thing, and in this sense it is not free but constrained to conform to its notion, to be rational. As Hegel commented in the Spirit of Christianity in a direct reference to an argument of Kant's from Religion within the Bounds of Reason Alone, the man who achieves the autonomy of Reason

"carries his Lord in himself, yet at the same time is his own slave". (Phenomenology, p. 211) 11

Reason conceived of as a thing is as harsh and unyielding a taskmaster as the Old Testament God and the positive Mosaic law. The freedom which Reason has in virtue of the unity of apperception is limited to the freedom to choose whether or not to obey this task master. It is, as was remarked earlier, because of the existence of this freedom that in Kant's view government is necessary, since it is unfortunately necessary to force men to choose universal Reason, rather than particular caprice.

We should not, however, take Hegel's criticism of the subjective idealism of Critical philosophy to be a criticism of idealism in general.<sup>12</sup>

11. See also Knox's note, *ibid.*

12. This appears to be Kojève's interpretation (*op. cit.* p.269). and Kojève also asserts that Hegel's absolute Idealism has nothing to do with what is ordinarily called "Idealism". And if terms are used in their usual senses, it must be said that Hegel's System is "realist". (*op. cit.* p.150). It is hard to reconcile this view with the quotation from the Logic which follows here.

Hegel's position is that it is not the abstract notion of Reason, but existing Reason or Spirit which is true. This position may be described as the idealism not of the subject, but of Spirit, or, to use Hegel's own expression, as absolute idealism.

"According to Kant, the things we know are *to us* appearances only, and we can never know their essential nature, which belongs to another world we cannot approach. Plain minds have not unreasonably taken exception to this subjective idealism, with its reduction of the facts of consciousness to a purely personal world, created by ourselves alone. For the true statement of the case is rather as follows. The things of which we have consciousness are mere phenomena, not for us only, but in their own nature; and the true and proper case of these things, finite as they are, is to have their existence founded not in themselves but in the universal divine Idea. This view of things, it is true, is as idealist as Kant's, but in contradistinction to the subjective idealism of the Critical philosophy should be termed absolute idealism. Absolute idealism, however, though it is far in advance of vulgar realism, is by no means merely restricted to philosophy. It lies at the root of all religion; for religion too believes the actual world we see, the sum total of existence, to be created and governed by God". (Lesser Logic, p. 73, §45)

To use more modern language we could say that subjective and absolute idealism are distinguished as rationalism and Reason. Rationalism, which is the attitude of the "abstract Absolute"<sup>13</sup>, may be defined as an attitude which takes Reason as it appears to consciousness, or as a moment of subjective Spirit, to be True in its own right. Reason in this sense is equivalent to the third moment of the Platonic soul, and its virtue is discipline - as we just saw to be the case in Kant's view of government. In rationalism, the organising discipline of Reason is the highest form of Spirit, or is itself true.

In Hegel's view, however, as in Plato's, Reason is subordinate to Spirit and to the virtue of justice, and absolute Idealism is the position which

13. See Ch. 1 above.

understands this. It is not rationalist, but reasonable.<sup>14</sup> The ultimate aim of Hegel's discussion of Reason, then, is to refer rationalism to the notion of justice, which will force it to abandon its one-sided and subjective view and to recognise the existence of a higher form of itself, Spirit.<sup>15</sup> Appropriately, then, Hegel uses Antigone's recognition of the principle of justice as independent of subjective Reason to introduce Reason to Spirit. Antigone's recognition of the independent existence of divine laws -

"They are not of yesterday or today, but everlasting  
Though where they came from none can tell"  
(Phenomenology, p. 261) 16

14. Michael Oakeshott's well-known essay on "Rationalism in Politics" (M. Oakeshott, Rationalism in Politics and other Essays, Methuen 1967) gives a useful general account of rationalism. His polemic, however, is sometimes excessively critical, and we must comment that he is mistaken in suggesting that Plato too can be tarred with the rationalist brush. It is true that he says things which may be interpreted as rationalist (Oakeshott op. cit. p. 5 cites Republic 501 a), but in asserting the dominance of justice over reason he transcends rationalism in the normal sense of the word, though this does not mean that he abandons reason, as some romantics (Oakeshott op. cit. p. 3 cites Keats) have done. We will return to the question of Plato's alleged rationalism in Chapter 7. Here we may cite Hegel's opinion, that "Plato's Republic, which passes proverbially as an empty ideal, is in essence nothing but an interpretation of the nature of Greek ethical life". (Philosophy of Right, p.10).
15. Thus the "universal class" in the Philosophy of Right (p. 131 ff) which corresponds in some ways to the guardian class of Plato's Republic, corresponds to the abstract idea of Reason, since it is relieved of private interest by being supported by the community in order to be able to work for the universal, and since its purpose is rationally to organise and in this sense to discipline the community. However, it is by no means the apex of government, and has nothing to do with justice. The civil service is always subordinate to sovereign government.
16. These lines are from Sophocles' Antigone, II 456-7. Hegel's enthusiasm for them amounts to an obsession. He quotes them again later in the Phenomenology (p.431), and in The Positivity of the Christian Religion (ETW, p. 155) and again twice in the Philosophy of Right (p.115 and p. 259).



is the transcendence of rationalism.

Natural consciousness of Reason is not so inconsistent as subjective idealism, which asserts both that reason is all reality, and yet in asserting that reason must dominate equally recognises the existence of another reality which is to be dominated.

"Actual Reason ... is not so inconsistent as that: on the contrary being at first only the *certainty* that it is all reality, it is aware in this *Notion* that *qua certainty, qua 'I'*, it is not yet in its truth reality, and it is impelled to raise its certainty to truth and to give filling to the empty 'mine'". (Phenomenology, p. 145)

Natural consciousness, in other words, simply takes up a rational attitude to the world, rather than making an abstract claim about the value or truth of the rational. The rationalist view of Reason holds that reason is only one part of reality, a part which ought to dominate over others. If Hegel is right, that in truth Reason is all reality, and not just part of it, he must be able to demonstrate that actual Reason does in fact have this characteristic. He must show that actual Reason is indeed an attitude which may be described as the certainty that it is all reality, and he must also transform this certainty into a truth by demonstrating it to be necessary. If actual Reason can be demonstrated to be all reality, to include consciousness and self-consciousness, and especially to include desire or passion, then the rationalist assertion that Reason is separate from these aspects and ought to dominate them falls. We may consider here what the conclusion that Reason is all reality implies, firstly for the individual, and secondly for the state, before we go on to examine Hegel's attempt to demonstrate its necessity.

At the level of the individual, this conclusion means that we must recognise that the rational man is also essentially self-interested or

passionate.<sup>17</sup> To regard him as rational only in so far as he is universal or thinks in terms of abstract reason is to view him from the standpoint of consciousness, to subsume his particular individuality under the universal. In truth, however, a rational being is essentially individual, and cannot be subsumed under the universal because he "has his centre in himself",<sup>18</sup> that is, because "man in general" is "an abstraction to which no real existence corresponds."<sup>19</sup> His whole being is rational, not just one part of it.

At the level of the state a similar argument also applies. If we regard the state simply as universal, and its citizens by implication merely as particular, then we lose sight of the state as a real individual entity. This may be seen in Hegel's comments on the notion of the separation of powers.

"This point is of the highest importance, and, if taken in its true sense, may rightly be regarded as the guarantee of public freedom ... That is to say, the principle of the division of powers contains the essential moment of difference, of rationality *realised*. But when the abstract Understanding handles it, it reads into it the false doctrine of the absolute self-subsistence of these powers against the others, and then one-sidedly interprets their relation to each other as a mutual restriction". (Philosophy of Right, p.175 §272) 20

17. Cf. Philosophy of History, p. 23. "*nothing great in the World* has been accomplished without *passion*." Hegel's World Historical Individuals are individuals in the full sense; active, reasonable, passionate men. By pointing to the significance of a man such as Julius Caesar, Hegel is challenging the Kantian view that history is simply the development of 'universal cosmopolitan existence'. Caesar was not a bureaucrat trying to realise a universal plan but a passionate and self-interested man. Will we say that because of that his actions had no historical significance? (See G.D.O'Brien, op. cit. pp.116-126): cf also the "right of Heroes" mentioned in the Philosophy of Right, p.67)
18. Philosophy of History, p.17.
19. Ibid, p.24. Sartre meant much the same thing when he argued that man is distinguished from other beings (whose essence lies outside itself) by the fact that his existence preceeds his essence. (Sartre Existentialism and Humanism, Methuen 1948 p. 26 ff; Being and Nothingness op.cit. p.xxxi and p.25)
20. Hegel also discusses the separation of powers in the Philosophy of Mind, p. 269 §541.

The power of the state is in this view something particular and irrational and which contradicts the idea of the rationality of the state. This power must therefore be brought under the control of Reason, and this is achieved through limiting state power by dividing it and setting the powers against each other, that is, through 'checks and balances'.

The state is therefore deprived of its power to act as an individual. This reaches its extreme in the French Revolution,<sup>21</sup> and Hegel goes on to comment that

"If the powers (e.g. what are called the 'Executive' and the 'Legislature') become self-subsistent, then as we have recently seen on a grand scale, the destruction of the state is forthwith a *fait accompli*". (ibid).

This is essentially a result of making the legislature alone the rational aspect of the constitution, in virtue of its universal application. In Hegel's view, however, both the executive - the principle of power - and the Crown - the principle of subjective individuality - are equally essential elements of a rational constitution.<sup>22</sup> Reason is in its nature actively involved in the world, and just because of this it necessarily involves not only the universal, but also the aspect of objective existence or power, which pertains to consciousness<sup>23</sup> and which makes it able to act, and equally the subjective moment of being-for-self which motivates and directs its action.<sup>24</sup>

21. According to Knox this is the event referred to in the next quotation. (Philosophy of Right, p. 367) Knox also points out two apparent references to Kant in the passage we are considering (ibid).

22. Philosophy of Right, p. 273.

23. In the sense that Understanding is "absolute power" (Phenomenology, p.18).

24. Phenomenology, p. 138 - the relevant passage is quoted in brief on p. 220 above.

If we assert that the state is rational in the sense of being universal, general, cosmopolitan, classless, homogeneous, etc., we find that in fact only part of the state in fact has this characteristic, and our assertion is reduced to an abstract opinion that the state in general ought to be brought under the discipline of this part.<sup>25</sup> This means that the state contains other parts which are essentially irrational, or that the state in general is not rational. If on the other hand we assert that the state is rational in the sense in which Reason is all reality, then this collision of the 'ought' with the 'is' disappears, since there is nothing which is not Reason.<sup>26</sup> This is what Hegel means by his famous epigram, that

"What is rational is actual and what is actual is rational"  
(Philosophy of Right, p.10; also lesser Logic, p.9 §6)

This, of course, is easy to say, but has not yet been shown to be true. As yet actual Reason is only the certainty that it is all reality, and this must be demonstrated as a necessity and therefore as a truth. If this can be achieved, however, it will have the significance of transforming Reason into Spirit, since "Reason is Spirit when its certainty of being all reality has been raised to truth."<sup>27</sup> Only natural consciousness, that is, "actual Reason", is amenable to this demonstration. Subjective idealism is merely a generalised assertion about the nature of Reason. and this is not the same as the certainty of Reason. Both subjective

25. See for example Fichte, 'The Closed Commercial State' and 'On the Creation of the Rational State'. In Reiss ed. The Political Thought of the German Romantics, Oxford 1955 pp.86-102 and pp 118-124

26. See lesser Logic, p. 9 f §6.

27. Phenomenology, p. 263.

idealism and natural consciousness view Reason from the standpoint of consciousness, but while subjective idealism makes an academic statement, natural consciousness is actually actively involved and interested in the world; although it does not yet know that this active involvement has the significance of being Reason. If Reason is indeed the certainty of being all reality, then only actual Reason really is Reason, and subjective idealism is at most only its abstract notion. If it is easy to show the inconsistency of subjective idealism, it is not possible to gain a positive result from this criticism. In order to achieve a "determinate negation" of Reason subjective idealism must be left behind, and we must turn instead to the experience of the natural consciousness of Reason, for only here do we find a certainty which is capable by determinate negation of being transformed into a truth.

## (b) The Experience of Reason

The natural consciousness or certainty of Reason displays nine distinct rational attitudes. Since these are attitudes of consciousness, they regard their objects as discrete things. Phenomenal knowledge must dissolve this fixity and lead natural consciousness to experience its objects as moments of Spirit.

In so far as natural consciousness does not have this experience it is guilty of rationalism, or rather of nine distinct rationalisms. These rationalisms however differ from the grand Kantian rationalism in two respects. Firstly, as has already been said, they are practical attitudes, and though we may show that they are based upon an implicit assumption of the dominance of reason, they do not make this claim explicitly. Secondly, while the rationalism of Critical philosophy and its forbears is based upon a claim for the value of the universal, for thought in the abstract, each of the attitudes of natural consciousness is already at least one step removed from the universal. Each includes in some form a notion of *individuality*, and various forms of the notion of *character*<sup>28</sup> in particular turn up often.

It is by making this notion of individuality explicit for natural consciousness that phenomenal knowledge will be able to lead it away from the notion of Reason as something merely universal, and therefore unreal, toward the notion of Reason as essentially individual, and therefore as real. As we have seen, the notion that Reason is real is equivalent to the notion of Spirit. It is by demonstrating that Reason in fact or in practice is not merely a combination of a merely subjective principle (the unity of apperception) with a universal principle (the

28. In the sense of the Greek *Ny le*.



theoretical faculty), but something essentially individual which itself is greater and more real than these two abstract moments of it, that Hegel shows that Reason is in fact real, and is therefore Spirit.<sup>29</sup>

Hegel's discussion of Reason is long, and in places obscure. Reason, after all, includes within itself both consciousness and self-consciousness and it is therefore more complex than either of these attitudes considered in isolation - three times more complex, to be precise. However, while it is therefore entitled to the amount of space and attention Hegel devotes to it, it will be necessary to keep our discussion of it here to a minimum, in order to leave space for Spirit.

This will be done only to save space, however, and two particular misapprehensions should be avoided. Firstly, it should not be assumed that Hegel's argument in the chapter on Reason is less relevant because it refers to some academic theories which are now out-dated and obsolete. This may well be true of Schelling's Philosophy of Nature, which is the central object of Hegel's criticism in "Observation of Nature",<sup>30</sup> and of Physiognomy and Phrenology. However, the attitudes in question are held by Hegel to be essential moments of Reason, so that even if the specific versions of the attitudes he criticises are no longer academically current or respectable, the attitudes in general must be recognised as real. In fact in most cases where the specific attitudes Hegel refers

29. For Hegel's notion of individuality as a unity of universality and particularity, see lesser Logic p. 266 ff §§163-166, or Philosophy of Right, p. 23 §7.

30. Hyppolite, op. cit. p.249.

to are obsolete, others may be found without too much difficulty to have taken their place. For example, in the place of Phrenology, which connected criminal character to the shape of the skull, we could cite the modern theory that criminal character may in some cases be the result of a chromosome excess.<sup>31</sup> This theory may well succeed in establishing an empirical connection, where Phrenology presumably failed. However, its implication that Spirit lies in the structure of a cell is formally speaking no different from the implication of Phrenology, that Spirit is a bone,<sup>32</sup> and in this sense Hegel's arguments are equally relevant.

Secondly, Hegel's arguments are primarily arguments which will lead natural consciousness through a series of necessary experiences towards Spirit, and ultimately to the Absolute Idea, and only secondarily criticisms of particular arguments. This means that what we most need is to understand the structure of the whole argument, and that only once we understand the point of the whole argument will we be able to understand the full significance of its details. We should not regard the particular arguments Hegel presents as arguments which can be understood in isolation from the general argument,<sup>33</sup> which we may skip or take an interest in as we please.

31. Taylor, Walton, and Young, The New Criminology, Routledge 1973, p.44 ff. In the case of Physiognomy we may cite Lailan Young's recently published book on the Chinese art of *Sang Mien*, The Secrets of the Face (Hodder & Stoughton 1983)

32. Phenomenology, p. 208.

33. Alistair MacIntyre's article "Hegel on Faces and Skulls" in A. MacIntyre, op. cit. pp. 219-237 seems to me to be guilty of this. It is easy enough to criticise Physiognomy and Phrenology, but quite another thing to use this criticism to lead natural consciousness towards the notion of Spirit, and it is the latter aspect only, which MacIntyre ignores, which makes Hegel's argument worth studying.

The general structure of Hegel's presentation of Reason, then, is as follows:

Firstly, Reason takes up the standpoint of consciousness, relating to objective things (including people). Its attitude however, differs from that of consciousness since it is now conscious of itself.

"Previously, its perception and *experience* of various aspects were something that only *happened* to consciousness; but here, consciousness *makes its own* observations and experiments. 'Meaning' and perceiving, which previously were superseded *for us*, are now superseded by consciousness itself. Reason sets to work to *know* the truth, to find in the form of a Notion that which for 'meaning' and 'perceiving' is a Thing; i.e. it seeks to possess in thinghood the consciousness only of itself". (Phenomenology, p. 146).

It is in this connection that Hegel comments that reason has a "universal interest in the world".<sup>34</sup> It approaches the world in three different ways, according to the three aspects of the object of consciousness. Firstly, it regards it simply as an object, and is "Observation of Nature".<sup>35</sup> Secondly, it returns to observe the self, and discovers "Logical and Psychological Laws". Thirdly, it turns to the unity of the previous two moments and seeks in nature an expression of the inner principle of the self, in "Physiognomy and Phrenology". Through this movement it develops the idea of character from the simple idea of an inner cause of an outer appearance up to the point where it is the cause of an individual personality.

34. Phenomenology, p. 146.

35. In this and the following two paragraphs the words in quotation marks, without references, refer to Hegel's section headings in the chapter on Reason.

The second major attitude of Reason is the attitude of "Rational Self-Consciousness". Here Reason abandons the idea that an inner principle determines character, and, turning in towards itself, considers the motivations it may freely choose to regard as the cause of its own actions. These divide again into three, since Rational self-consciousness too is here an object for consciousness. They are firstly "Pleasure", regarded as an objective determination or as "Necessity"; secondly, the "Law of the Heart", that is, a subjective determination which is independent; and finally "Virtue" which contains both subjective and objective moments and which is free.<sup>36</sup> Through this movement the subjective aspect of character rises to its highest form in which it is grasped as an unconditioned universal, the principle of free individuality, and the experience is gained that

"the movement of individuality is the reality of the universal".  
(Phenomenology, p. 235).

The third and final attitude of Reason, then regards individuality not merely as subjective, but as "Real in-and-for-itself", and takes the subjective and objective sides as a unity, or from the point of view of their relationship. This may be expressed in general by saying that its object is neither nature nor the self, but the *category*<sup>37</sup> which mediates between them. In its objective mode, this appears as the notion of character which we find in the great realist novels,<sup>38</sup> as an interplay between an "original determinate nature"<sup>39</sup> and a set of given circumstances, and this produces the notion of *die Sache Selbst*, that is,

36. Phenomenology, p. 211.

37. Phenomenology, p. 236, cf Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, op.cit. p.113.

38. In the work of Hardy, Flaubert, Zola, and Balzac, for example.

39. Phenomenology, p. 238.

of 'facts'. The arbitrariness and ethical vacuity of this conception<sup>40</sup> refer it back to the subjective side, and here the category becomes the categorical imperative, the foundation of a regulative law which will make up for the deficiency of the "original determinate nature". This however, since it is purely subjective, has no room for a concrete content, and Reason therefore attempts not to deduce laws but to test the rationality of laws which exist. In this, its final moment, it fails to establish a rational test, but discovers through this failure the notion of real ethical character,<sup>41</sup> which is the basis of Spirit.

In the remainder of this chapter we will sketch in a few details to fill out the experience of actual Reason. We will also point out in a general way the directions which may be taken by the nine rationalist deviations which take each of the moments of Reason respectively to be true in their own right. We will see that the errors of rationalism extend into a wide variety of activities which may seem at first sight to be quite innocent and respectable pursuits. That is, we will see the extent of the dominance of the "abstract Absolute"; and we may comment in advance that in virtue of this Hegel seems to have been excessively optimistic in imagining that the dominance of rationalism's abstract Absolute had already subsided in his lifetime. Oakeshott's pessimism about the possibility of resisting rationalism<sup>42</sup> may well seem to be more realistic.

40. Cf. Sartre, Existentialism and Humanism, Methuen 1948, p.42 f.

41. Phenomenology, p. 262 : Hegel's term is *Gesinnung*, which Miller translates as 'disposition' and which also carries the signification of 'sentiment'.

42. Oakeshott, op. cit. p.34f.

## (c) Observing Reason

Observing Reason feels at home in the world, but does not yet know the world as its own. Just as natural consciousness earlier could not move directly from consciousness to Reason without first passing through self-consciousness, since it had to know itself before it could know its interest in the world; so observing Reason cannot reach self-knowledge without first returning into and observing its own self.

"While at first it is only dimly aware of its presence in the world, or only knows quite simply that this world as its own, it strides forward in this belief to a general appropriation of its assured possessions, and plants the symbol of its sovereignty on every height and in every depth. But this superficial 'it is mine', is not its ultimate interest; the joy of this general appropriation finds still in its possession the alien 'other' which abstract Reason does not contain within itself. Reason is dimly aware of itself as a profounder essence than the pure 'I' *is*, and must demand that difference, that being, in its manifold variety, becomes its very own, that it behold itself as the *actual* would and find itself present as an outer shape and Thing. But even if Reason digs into the very entrails of things and opens every vein in them so that it may gush forth to meet itself, it will not attain this joy; it must have completed itself inwardly before it can experience the consummation of itself". (Phenomenology, p. 146).

The simplest form of observation for Hegel is description. Even in this nominalist form, however, Reason can be seen to contain a rational element. It

"must at least be the remembrance [*Gedächtnis*] of the object, which expresses in a universal way what in actuality is present only as a single item". (Phenomenology, p. 147).

Remembrance is explicitly my own, and it is this subjective moment which always distinguishes the object of Reason from the things which are the objects of consciousness. It is for this reason that the platonic world of forms, which also involves memory, belongs to Reason, rather than to the supersensible world of understanding which is explicitly alien, something which is not remembered but discovered. In memory, Reason is on home ground.



This nominalism develops into a version of explanation which differs from the explanations of the Understanding in being teleological. As Hyppolite says,

"Observing Reason now seeks a new kind of law, which may be formulated as follows: the exterior is the expression of the interior". (Hyppolite, op. cit. p. 249).

This type of explanation is indeed necessary to explain nature. We need to be able to explain that the purpose of the pollen is to fertilise the seed, the purpose of the seed to reproduce the plant, and so on. Observing Reason, however, makes the mistake of regarding the inner itself as real. Hegel is thinking especially of Schelling's philosophy of nature, in which the inner dominates to the extent that it becomes necessary that nature should exhibit the structures of thought in its own being. This cannot be, since though nature exists for Reason in one sense, there is also an aspect to its existence which is independent of Reason. Nature is a living entity, which is therefore self-subsistent, and its independence must be respected. Hoffmeister summarises the difference between Schelling and Hegel on this point succinctly:

"Schelling thinks nature directly; Hegel thinks nature through the knowledge of nature". (Hyppolite op.cit. p. 244).

We have already considered Hegel's view of Schelling's philosophy of nature in Chapter One above. We may recall here that Hegel's objection was, essentially, that, in spite of his efforts Schelling cannot succeed in including any notion of difference or of quality in his account of nature, since he wants ultimately to reduce it to a manifestation of a single or self identical Reason - an  $A = A$ . The first error of rationalism, then, is this reductionist attitude to nature, which turns it into a "night in which all cows are black".<sup>43</sup> This approach may also

43. Phenomenology, p. 9.

be seen in Engels' Dialectics of Nature.<sup>44</sup>

In the second moment of observing reason, the notion of the inner becomes developed from the simple idea of potentiality into a universal law governing the appearance of things. Here it encounters logical and psychological laws, and in doing so becomes observation not of nature, but of Spirit.<sup>45</sup>

Hegel makes short work of logical laws. Laws of thought

"...are outside reality. To say that they have no *reality* means in general nothing else than that they lack truth. They are indeed, not supposed to be the *entire* truth, but still *formal* truth. But what is purely formal without any reality is a mere figment of thought, or pure abstraction without that internal division which would be nothing else but the content. ... It is sufficient here to have pointed out the invalidity of the so-called Laws of Thought from the general nature of the case." (Phenomenology, p. 180 and p.181)

The second error of rationalism, then, is to suppose that formal logic is capable of expressing any truth whatever.<sup>46</sup> What is logically correct is not the same as what is true, since the latter must be knowledge of something, or must involve the moment of consciousness.

44. Hegel also has been accused of holding to an absurd *a priori* philosophy of nature (e.g. K. Popper, The Open Society and its Enemies, Vol. 2, Routledge 1966, p.28). Though I cannot speak for Hegel's own Philosophy of Nature, this seems unlikely on the basis of what Hegel says in the Phenomenology.

45. Phenomenology, p. 147.

46. Those who seek to formalise Hegel's Logic for him might ask whether Hegel would have thanked them. See e.g. Michael Kosok's article "The Formalization of Hegel's Dialectical Logic" in MacIntyre, op. cit. pp. 237-287.

Psychological laws, which are the actuality of logical laws,<sup>47</sup> face the same difficulty. In so far as observational psychology generalises from its observations towards laws of behaviour, it loses its grasp of the individual which it is observing, for the individual is after all both specific, and not governed by laws, or is "spontaneously active in face of them",<sup>48</sup> as Hegel puts it. Psychology of this kind cannot claim true knowledge of Spirit for the same reason that formal Logic cannot: Spirit is individual and real, while the psychological law is purely formal and incapable of any content. Behaviourism in general, then, is a dimension of the second error of rationalism. Psychological laws however, have the positive significance that in so far as natural consciousness perceives that they cannot be the cause of free Spirit, it is referred away from the notion of the inner as a general law towards the notion of the inner as an individual character. Here it encounters and observes

"the relationship of Nature and Spirit in the form of sensuous being, and ... seeks itself as actuality in the form of immediate being". (Phenomenology, p. 147).

This sensuous being is the inner principle of character which Physiognomy and Phrenology take to be expressed in the face and the skull respectively.

We need not spend much time with these pseudo-sciences. Hegel himself seems to find it hard to take them seriously. One of the reasons he gives

47. Phenomenology, p. 181.

48. Ibid, p. 182. Cf also p. 166f above. Behavioural psychology relates to psychoanalysis as Reason to Understanding - though both in fact contain elements of the other, and may commit each other's errors.

them the amount of space he does seems to be that he enjoys making jokes about them. The main point of Hegel's argument is to push this attitude to the logical conclusion of its deterministic view of character, that Spirit is a bone, that is a dead thing.<sup>49</sup> Natural consciousness, however, is quite sure that it is alive, which is why, as Lichtenberg says, every honest fellow will retort to physiognomy, and to phrenology, "with a box on the ear".<sup>50</sup> The notion that it is alive, however, signals the end of observation as an attitude, just as earlier life referred consciousness to self-consciousness. Observation in general deals with the object only as an object for Reason, but once it recognises life it must allow independence to its object, and it must therefore allow its character to be not something fixed by the reason of the observer, but as something which has the freedom to determine itself, or to actualise itself through its own activity. If Spirit is a bone, this at least means that Spirit exists.<sup>51</sup>

The third error of rationalism, then, is evident enough. It is the error of supposing that character is something fixed and even material,<sup>52</sup> a *deus ex machina*. Physiognomy and Phrenology are clearly only extreme examples of this attitude, which is easy enough to criticise even in its less extreme forms. Hegel's contribution is not so much to criticise this view, as to grasp it as a miscomprehension of the essential nature of Reason, a failure to understand Reason itself as Spirit.

49. Phenomenology, p. 210.

50. Hegel quotes this twice, once in the context intended by Lichtenberg, that is, as an answer to physiognomy, and again later in the context of phrenology. Phenomenology, p. 193, p. 205.

51. Phenomenology, p. 208; Hyppolite, op. cit. p. 275.

52. Hegel says " Brain fibres and the like" (Phenomenology, p.210): today we might encounter more sophisticated views such as genetic coding, or what one psychologist calls "parental programming", (See E.Berne, Sex in Human Loving, Penguin, 1973 p. 144 ff).

- (d) The Actualisation of Rational Self-Consciousness through its own Activity.

The subjective element of Reason, its attitude to self-consciousness, has been described as the active realisation of Reason, and as the seat of individualism.<sup>53</sup> We should, however, be cautious of such formulations. Reason in its essence is active,<sup>54</sup> and observation is also an activity,<sup>55</sup> and we cannot therefore distinguish the present attitude specifically as an active one. Further, the whole Phenomenology is a realization, in both senses of that word: that is, it both brings natural consciousness through experience to a position of knowledge where it may say "I now realize this to be the case", and gives an account of the realization of an idea in an objective world, a realization which may be historical. In the present case, we should say that we are dealing not so much with the realization of reason, but with something more specific; the teleological accounts which reason gives for the motivations of its own actions, that is, for its inner self.

In this sense this attitude may certainly be individualist, if it supposes that its own subjective motivations are the only factors which may account for its actions. In acknowledging this, however, we must be careful not to conclude that when in the following section it considers its relationship to other rational beings, it is any less individualist. This relationship is still conceived of as a relationship of rational subjects. Only the individualist, who conceives of himself as absolute, has 'relationships'.

53. Hyppolite, op. cit. p.272 ff.

54. Phenomenology, p. 138.

55. Phenomenology, p. 147.

It is only by recognising Reason as something which exists, or Spirit, that we transcend individualism.

The first motivation Reason finds for its own actions is Pleasure.

Although Hegel is not explicit, it seems clear that he has "sensuous love" in mind.<sup>56</sup> Pleasure lies between the purely libidinal desire of self-consciousness, and the spiritual love which is a moment of the family and of the state, and which Hegel discusses in the context of greek tragedy. Hegel does not approve of pleasure, and quotes Goethe:

"It despises intellect and science  
The supreme gifts of man  
It has given itself to the devil  
And must perish".<sup>57</sup>  
(Phenomenology, p. 218)

While desire seeks to consume or destroy its object, pleasure wants only to possess it, that is, to overcome "the form of its otherness or independence".<sup>58</sup> The sexual act, from this point of view, is not the result simply of lust, but has the significance of being a union. This union, however, is only temporary, and consciousness learns from experience that the unity which it sought is not the unity of two merely particular individuals, but two real individuals, each of which "is only a moment, or a *universal*".<sup>59</sup> This experience is sufficient to refer us to the "law of the heart", which finds the universal within the individual in the form of a purely subjective moral law.

56. Hyppolite op. cit. p.282; Taylor op.cit. p.163. Pleasure translates "*die Lust*", which does not mean lust, but does nevertheless carry some of the connotations of this English word.

57. For the significance of the contemporary references here see Hyppolite, op.cit, p.36 and p.285 ff, Taylor, op.cit. p. 163, and (specifically on Goethe) Kaufmann, op. cit. p.139.

58. Phenomenology, p.218.

59. Ibid.



The fourth error or rationalism, the failure to transcend the attitude of pleasure, is not so much the pursuit of pleasure for its own sake, i.e. hedonism, as the idea that pleasure can be the cause of phenomena which belong strictly to Spirit, and in particular, of love. Pleasure in fact, may be reconciled only within the family and the state. As Hegel says later

"The individual who seeks the pleasure of enjoying his individuality finds it in the family, and the necessity in which that pleasure passes away is his own self-consciousness as a citizen of his nation" (Phenomenology, p. 276f).

The individual who takes the attitude of pleasure, by contrast, imagines the reverse, that the purpose of the family is his pleasure, and that the family therefore has no essential existence above this pleasure, no purpose once this pleasure has been satisfied.<sup>60</sup>

In this attitude, it becomes clear that what have been described here as 'errors' of rationalism have a further significance of being moral wrongs. Specifically, they refuse to acknowledge the existence of Spirit, and in the case of pleasure this is represented as not only an error but also a wrong through the notion that it engenders the punishing necessity of fate.

Necessity is in Hegel's view the direct corollary of pleasure. If I desire another solely as an object, then it follows that the subjective element - who this object is - is irrelevant. Any object will do. This arbitrariness and emptiness of content, Hegel says

"is just what is called necessity, for necessity, fate, and the like, is just that about which we cannot say what it does, what its specific laws and positive content are". (Phenomenology, p.219)

60. Cf Philosophy of Right, p. 262f, Addition to §163.

Pleasure tried to possess life, but "in trying to do so it really laid hold of death",<sup>61</sup> for the individual who is possessed is no longer an independent living being. This consciousness therefore find itself in a position which is not so much contradictory as beyond its comprehension, and it is thus cast at the feet of fate, condemned

"to become a riddle to itself, the consequences of its deeds being for it not the deeds themselves". (Phenomenology, p.220).<sup>62</sup>

Pleasure finds itself confronted by an "*abstract necessity*"<sup>63</sup>, which

"...has the character of the merely negative uncomprehended power of universality, on which individuality is smashed to pieces" (Phenomenology, p.221).

This abstract necessity, it is true, is not the same as fate, though the necessity which results from pleasure is indeed a moment of fate in the full sense. Its central function in terms of the experience of natural consciousness is to refer it to the idea of the law of the heart, that is, the principle of necessity within itself.<sup>64</sup>

Self-conscious reason in this attitude rises above necessity and becomes independent. Its own independence, however, is contradicted by the independence of others, and the law of its heart conflicts both with actual law and with other subjective ideas of law. This leads it to experience a number of contradictions. For example, in so far as it wants to realise the law of its own heart, it regards real law as opposed to its own ideas;

61. Phenomenology, p. 220.

62. Cf. Phenomenology, p. 283. Oedipus did not recognise his father, but must accept the consequences of having killed him.

63. Phenomenology, p.220.

64. Phenomenology, p.221.

yet this means that if it realises its own idea it thereby ceases to become the law of its heart and it stands opposed to it.<sup>65</sup> The individual must be the source of law, yet the intentions of other individuals must be opposed to the law of my own heart; and so on.<sup>66</sup> The positive result of this 'frenzy of self-conceit' is that natural consciousness is referred to the notion of a moral law which is not merely subjective, but exists in relation to the world. This is the notion of virtue. Just as self-consciousness earlier achieved the freedom of mutual recognition through the notion of virtue, so independent rational self-consciousness becomes free by giving up the notion of the conditioned universal law of its own heart in favour of the unconditioned universal notion of virtue.

The fifth error of rationalism, then, Hegel has identified as conceit - specifically the conceit which holds its subjective evaluation of the good to be superior to any other, or rather, which does not recognise any other. This conceit may be found in general in writers who use the metaphor of the social contract, those who find, in Hegel's words, "only a universal resistance and struggle of all against one another".<sup>67</sup>

65. Phenomenology, p.223.

66. Phenomenology, p.223.

67. Phenomenology, p. 227. This seems fairly clearly to be a reference to Hobbes (see Leviathan, Ch. 13). Hyppolite (op.cit. p.285) suggests that there are also references to Rousseau in this passage; though we should not conclude that this passage is intended as a definitive criticism of these authors. We may also notice some resonances with atheistic existentialism - appropriately, since this passage is parallel to Lordship and Bondage - and existentialism is certainly conceited. Cf. Natural Law, p. 88: "the ethical order posited according to relations alone, or externality and coercion understood as a totality is self-cancelling".

The metaphor of the social contract implies that the state is a result of the ideas and requirements of the individual, and that membership of the state is something optional, whereas in fact the state exists whether we like it or not.<sup>68</sup> States are not, in general, founded by agreements, but by acts of war, and historically speaking, great constitution makers and law givers are generally preceded by great warrior heroes.<sup>69</sup> Thus, if pleasure imagined that the source of the relationship of the family was his own lust, and failed to acknowledge the power of the family as an institution, so the law of the heart imagines that the state is the result of his own subjective deliberations, and fails to acknowledge the state as an independent power. Its conceit is that mere reason is greater than actual law.

The third and final moment of rational self-consciousness, the attitude of virtue, reverses this - thought it does not go so far as to acknowledge the independent power of the state. For the virtuous consciousness, individuality must be sacrificed to law.

"For the virtuous consciousness, law is the essential moment, and individuality the one to be nullified, and therefore both in its own consciousness as well as in the "way of the world".  
(Phenomenology, p.228)

The attitude Hegel seems to have in mind is not so much the ancient idea of virtue, as the modern idea of virtue of the "heroes of Romanticism".<sup>70</sup>

Since the principle of individuality had less value in the ancient world, the idea of the sacrifice of individuality is proportionately less significant, and for this reason the virtuous idea of self-sacrifice is a modern idea. The idea of virtue is the same in both cases, but only in the

68. Philosophy of Right, p. 59, §75.

69. Ibid, p. 245. (Addition to §93). See also Ibid, p.73 §102, and Philosophy of History, p. 251.

70. Hyppolite, op. cit. p.297.

modern interpretation does it become "generally perverted", and Hegel's argument here applies in general to this unreal form.<sup>71</sup>

The value of virtue, for Hegel, is that it tempers the self-indulgence and the self-conceit, respectively, of the previous two moments by introducing the idea of discipline.<sup>72</sup> However, while discipline is certainly what is needed, Hegel regards this virtuous interpretation of it as a sham. It is essentially personal, the subjective idea of discipline only. True discipline can be achieved only by the individual who acknowledges Spirit, and, like Antigone, is prepared to lay down her life in the service of Spirit.

"True discipline requires nothing less than the sacrifice of the entire personality as a proof that individual peculiarities are no longer insisted upon". (Phenomenology, p. 228)

Virtue, by contrast, insists that its virtue is essentially its own, and is opposed to the less moral "way of the world". However, as Bradley once said, "to wish to be better than the world is to be already on the threshold of immorality".<sup>73</sup> and virtue is in this sense immoral. Thus, in the Spirit of Christianity and its Fate, Hegel opposes the attitude of virtue to the attitude of love.

"The virtues, because of their limits, always put something objective beyond them, and the variety of virtues on all the greater and insurmountable multiplicity of objectivity. Love alone has no limits". (Phenomenology, p. 247).

Love, however, is something only Spirit can achieve, and Reason can rise only at the most to self-love.

71. Hegel distinguishes ancient and modern ideas of virtue on p. 234 of the Phenomenology.

72. It will be recalled that the notion of discipline occurred earlier in the move from Lordship and Bondage to Freedom of Self-Consciousness, which is parallel to the move made here. See p. 196 above.

73. F.H. Bradley, "My Station and its Duties" in Ethical Studies H.S.King, 1876, p. 180.

The specific error of virtue - the sixth error or rationalism - is that it tells the individual what to do, but without giving him any good reason (other than self-love) for doing so. It abstracts away entirely from his individual involvement; but, as we know, Reason is essentially involved in the world. Virtue is always *à contre coeur*, demanding the sacrifice of the individual to the universal, but giving the individual no reason for wanting to do this, other than the blank assertion that the universal is somehow better. This can be seen clearly in Rousseau, who having praised Montesquieu<sup>74</sup> for making virtue the cardinal principle of democracy, writes

"It is under this constitution before all others that the criticism must be armed with strength and fidelity, and repeat from the bottom of his heart every day the words a virtuous Palatine once spoke in the Diet of Poland: '*Malo periculosam libertatem quam quietum servitum*' [better liberty with danger than peace with slavery]". (Rousseau, The Social Contract, op. cit. p. 113 f)

To use a modern term, then, we might say that virtue is guilty of being 'ideological'.<sup>75</sup>

The trouble with this attitude, which is experienced by natural consciousness, is that it is boring, and this contradicts an essential characteristic of reason, that it is interested.

"The fatuousness of this rhetoric seems, too, in an unconscious way to be a certainty for the culture of our time, since all interest in the whole mass of such rhetoric, and the way it is used to boost one's ego, has vanished - a loss of interest which is expressed in the fact that it produces only a feeling of boredom" (Phenomenology, p.234).

74. For Hegel's view of Montesquieu's idea of virtue see Philosophy of Right, p.177, §273, and Hyppolite op.cit. p. 367.

75. I use this term in more or less the sense used by Bernard Crick in In Defence of Politics. Kojève's view that this section demonstrates "the impotence of non-revolutionary intervention" (op.cit. p. 273) displays precisely the ideological attitude Hegel is criticising.



The feeling of boredom, however, is not the same as the attitude of disinterest which characterises consciousness. To be bored is to want to be interested, and this implies an awareness of the interest as something which has been lost, not something merely absent.<sup>76</sup> From this experience natural consciousness learns that

"the 'way of the world' is not as bad as it looked;  
for its reality is the reality of the universal".  
(Phenomenology, p. 235).

This, however, means that it is certain that reason is all reality, which earlier was apparent only to us.<sup>77</sup> It sees that "the movement of individuality is the reality of the universal".<sup>78</sup> Individuality thus takes itself to be real in and for itself, and it remains to examine this attitude, the totality of individuality, before going on to Spirit - for real individuality is as yet only implicitly, and not explicitly Spirit.

76. Cf. Phenomenology, p. 49. For natural consciousness "the realisation of the Notion counts rather as the loss of its own self; for it does lose its truth on this path".

77. Phenomenology, p. 236.

78. Phenomenology, p. 236; p. 235 above.

(e) Individuality which Takes itself to be Real in and for Itself.

The object of the third major attitude of Reason is not nature, or Spirit, but the *category*<sup>79</sup> which mediates between them. The individual is now not merely an object, nor a subjective inner principle, but a real living individual; and Reason is determined as practical Reason.<sup>80</sup>

In the first moment of this attitude, individuality is reduced to a mere relationship between these two aspects which are, properly understood, only moments of it. Individuality is an interplay between an "original determinate nature"<sup>81</sup> and a set of given circumstances. In natural consciousness, this appears as what may be termed a pragmatic attitude to the world. It finds itself in a situation, and proceeds without further ado to act in it.

The experience of this action leads it to a new object, *die Sache Selbst*,<sup>82</sup> which, as Hyppolite points out<sup>83</sup> corresponds to the Greek *pragma*.

It was argued earlier that a fact (*Sache*) is a 'thing' in which an individual has a special interest.<sup>84</sup> Natural consciousness, however, does not to begin with see it this way. Its view is that the circumstances it finds itself in are merely the objective conditions which it has subjectively to deal with. They have the status of what Sartre calls

79. See note 37 to this Chapter.

80. Phenomenology, p. 267.

81. That is, character understood in the sense of Hardy's epigram 'Character is fate' - an interpretation of both character and fate which Hegel would certainly have rejected.

82. See note 9 to this Chapter.

83. Hyppolite, p. 299.

84. Ibid. See also Phenomenology, p. 246.

"facticity".<sup>85</sup> Natural consciousness pretends to be the child of its circumstances, and does not accept that the situation may itself be affected by its own appreciation and evaluation of that situation. In pointing to something as a fact, it is denying any personal involvement or responsibility for that fact.

The specific error of this attitude, the seventh error of rationalism, is that it forces an unreal division between fact and value. Its empiricism is not true empiricism, but the empiricism only of understanding.<sup>86</sup> The seventh error of rationalism may be seen nowadays especially in the notion of a value-free social science, or the view that the empirical and theoretical aspects of social science are distinct and sometimes opposed practices. In truth, however, a fact is essentially something which is held to have a particular value. A truly value free social science would have to be a knowledge not of facts, but of things;<sup>87</sup> yet people<sup>are</sup> essentially distinct from things in so far as they are self-contained.<sup>88</sup> Similarly,

85. Sartre, Being and Nothingness, op. cit. p. 259. Cf. p. 205 above.

86. See Ch. 4 above, p. 137ff; also Natural Law, p. 58, lesser Logic p. 61, §38.

87. Durkheim, The Rules of Sociological Method, The Free Press of Glencoe, 1938. For Durkheim, a fundamental rule of sociological method is "Consider social facts as things" (op. cit. p. 14).

88. See notes 18 and 19 to this chapter.

any theoretical knowledge of the social must equally and essentially contain an empirical element, otherwise it remains purely abstract and cannot claim to be knowledge. Hegel's Philosophy of Right, we may note in this context, attempts to achieve not an abstract idea of politics, but a true knowledge of the state, and for this reason it discusses its empirical existence, that is, its institutions. True knowledge of the most trivial political fact can be achieved only through the mediation of speculative philosophical knowledge of the political, since the fact gains its true meaning only in relation to the political system in which it occurs. To recognise this, however, is to transcend the empiricism of understanding towards true empiricism.

Natural consciousness comes to experience this when it encounters an alternative interpretation of a situation, another consciousness which in the same 'things' finds different facts. If it is to maintain its view of the facts, it must claim that its view of the situation is not just a more accurate, but a *better* one than its opponents.<sup>90</sup> With this, however, it admits its interest, since it claims that its view of the facts has a special value for it, while previously it held them to be distinct from its judgements. This means, however, that what is objective is also essentially for it qua self-consciousness, or is essentially related to it as a subject; and the subject which in this way is essential has the character of immediate universality.

"Thus the 'matter in hand' [*die Sache Selbst*] no longer has the character of a predicate, and loses the character of lifeless abstract universality. It is rather substance permeated by individuality, *subject* in which there is individuality just as much *qua* individual or *qua this particular* individual, as

90. Cf. Phenomenology: for naive empiricism good and bad is a mere difference of quantity, that is, not an essential or qualitative difference at all.

*qua all* individuals; and it is the universal which has being only as this action of all and each, and a *reality* in the fact that *this particular* consciousness knows it to be its own reality and the reality of all". (Phenomenology, p. 252).

Natural consciousness is thus referred to the second moment of real individuality, the individual understood subjectively as something universal.

In this second moment, the category, which earlier was a specific mediation between nature and Spirit, now takes on the significance of being universal. It takes on the characteristics of necessity and of Law: that is, it is the categorical *imperative*. This means that Reason takes up the attitudes of lawgiver and tester of laws. It holds that through the application of a simple axiom, for example Kant's axiom "That a maxim of thy will shall count at the same time as a principle of universal legislation", it is possible for "the commonest untutored understanding" to deduce moral law for itself.<sup>91</sup> In this view, then, "sound Reason knows immediately what is right and good",<sup>92</sup> and knowledge of the good is no longer restricted to philosophers who take the trouble to search for it, as in Plato's view, but is open to everyone. Hegel criticises this general view of the categorical imperative in two stages, firstly as applied to subjective moral law, or as law giver, and secondly as applied to objective civil law,<sup>93</sup> or as testing laws, and we must take care to keep these two aspects separate.<sup>94</sup>

91. Both quotations are from Kant's Critique of Practical Reason (Book I Ch.1 §7, and Book 1 Ch. 1 §4), and are quoted by Hegel in Natural Law, p.76 and p.77.

92. Phenomenology, p. 253

93. In "The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate", ETW, p. 209f). Hegel distinguishes moral and political aspects of law in this way, and counterposes Christ's teaching of love to both.

94. Elsewhere - for example in Natural Law, p. 76 ff - Hegel criticises the categorical imperative in general without distinguishing its subjective and objective aspects.

To criticise the first view, Hegel takes an example which, as we have already seen, he used in his discussion of Kant's interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount in The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate:<sup>95</sup> the ethical commandment "Love thy neighbour as thyself".<sup>96</sup> This, to be sure, is at least a good sentiment. However, Hegel argues, since it is only an abstract idea, a maxim, it is incapable of a concrete content, and this means that it cannot be of any help in a specific situation. It is at best vague, and may even be wrong. Thus, if I am to love my neighbour actively - and love is essentially active - I must do him some good. In order to do this it is necessary that I know what is good for him: "I must love him *intelligently*".<sup>97</sup> It follows from this that the universal maxim does not apply universally, but only in specific cases where I know what is for his good. Further, if my neighbour were to be required to serve the state, or to receive some just punishment, then to love him, which would mean to want to protect him from the danger or injury involved, would amount to a moral wrong - though as it happens the state in fact has the power to prevent such wrong.<sup>98</sup>

The lesson which natural consciousness learns from this is that maxims such as this are not in fact laws at all, but merely commandments. Since they are merely universal, and cannot apply to any particular case, they do not have the form of necessity which is essential to law. As we saw especially in Chapter 3 above, the whole Phenomenology is founded upon the idea of necessity expressed in the notion that essence must exist; and mere commandments are not by this criterion essential. Natural consciousness is thus referred to existing law in order to achieve a content

95. ETW, p. 213.

96. Phenomenology, p. 255

97. Phenomenology, p. 255.

98. Ibid.



for its universal ideas, and it limits its own contribution to the idea that it may subjectively test the rationality of existing law.

The eighth error or rationalism, then, is the supposition that subjective reason alone is capable of producing actual moral ideas. Oakeshott summarises this attitude as follows:

"The morality of the Rationalist is the morality of the self-conscious pursuit of moral ideals, and the appropriate form of moral education is by precept, by the presentation and explanation of moral principles. This is represented as a higher morality (the morality of the free man: there is no end to the clap-trap) than that of habit, the unselfconscious following of a tradition of moral behaviour; but, in fact, it is merely morality reduced to a technique, to be acquired by training in an ideology rather than an education in behaviour". (M. Oakeshott, Rationalism in Politics, op. cit. p. 35).

This statement of the case seems to capture succinctly the mixture of ethical arrogance and ethical indifference which in general characterise this attitude.

In the final moment of Reason, 'Reason as testing laws', Reason limits the categorical imperative to the status of a rational test of actual law. Hobbes suggested such a general test for his Natural Laws (though strictly these are only maxims and belong to Reason as lawgiver), in the axiom "*Do that to another, which thou wouldst not have done to thyself*".<sup>99</sup>

Like the previous attitude, this one is not difficult to criticise. Hegel considers the examples of the idea of property, and, later, Kant's particular example of deposits.<sup>100</sup> The notion of private property, Hegel

99. Hobbes, Leviathan, op. cit. p. 214.

100. Hegel had used both examples in his discussion of Kant in Natural Law, p. 77-8.

admits, passes the Kantian test. It is non-contradictory, and in willing that my property be respected I can equally will that this should count as a principle for universal legislation. However, I may equally choose to will that I have no property, that goods be held in common, and that this principle instead should apply universally. Non-property is just as self-consistent as property, and Reason alone can find no ground for distinguishing them.

This attitude also supposes that the ground of the value of the law, if not the law itself, lies in my subjective will. This leads to the ninth, and final error of rationalism, which Hegel characterises as insolence.

"The law, as a specific law, has a contingent content; this means that it is the law of a single consciousness and has an arbitrary content. To legislate immediately in this way is thus the tyrannical insolence which makes caprice into a law and ethical behaviour into obedience to such a caprice - obedience to laws which are *merely* laws and not at the same time *commandments*. So, too, the second moment, in so far as it is isolated, means testing the laws, moving the immovable, means the insolence of a knowledge which argues itself into a freedom from absolute laws, treating them on an alien caprice". (Phenomenology, p. 260)

If Hegel has any particular example in mind in this passage it must be the politics of the French Revolution; and he returns to a similar argument in that context in a later section of the Phenomenology.<sup>101</sup> However, we may admit that the insolence Hegel talks about is more widespread.

If Reason cannot distinguish between two opposing laws which are self-consistent, perhaps it may at least demand that law should not be inconsistent? However, in Hegel's view this is of no value. If someone entrusts a deposit to me, and I later refuse to return it, I contradict myself only in so far as I maintain the view that I ought in fact to

101. "Absolute Freedom and Terror", Phenomenology, pp. 355-363, esp. p.360.

return it. This presupposition, however, is precisely what Reason must establish; but Reason alone can give no reason why I should not change my mind, and it admits, after all, that I am a free agent. If I do not change my mind, it must be not as a result of a process of ratiocination, but in virtue of a relation of knowledge, that is, an acknowledgement of the existence of another's property. This involves me in taking up an ethical disposition which is independent of Reason.

"Ethical disposition consists just in sticking steadfastly to what is right, and abstaining from all attempts to move or shake it, or desire it. Supposing something has been entrusted to me; it *is* the property of someone else and I acknowledge this *because* it *is so*, and I keep myself unfalteringly in this relationship". (Phenomenology, p. 262)

Natural consciousness comes to this position through acknowledging laws as both substantial commandments and as subjectively valid laws, since in this acknowledgement it is conscious of "law which has *intrinsic* being".<sup>102</sup> In this movement, Reason finally and in truth becomes a real individual existence, indeed, all reality. It is no longer seen as a mere property of consciousness, but is acknowledged instead to exist absolutely in its own right, and in this sense Reason has become Spirit.

"The law is equally an eternal law which is grounded not in the will of a particular individual, but is valid in and for itself; it is the absolute *pure will of all* which has the form of immediate being. Also it is not a *commandment* which only ought to be: it *is* and is *valid*; it is the universal 'I' of the category the 'I' which is immediately a reality, and the world *is* only this reality. (Phenomenology, p. 261).

Natural consciousness too, then, has been led through its experience to acknowledge the value and truth of Antigone's attitude, that what "is right is right because it is right".<sup>103</sup> It acknowledges

102. Phenomenology, p. 260.

103. Ibid, p. 262.

the "absoluteness of the right", <sup>104</sup> and in doing so it abandons the attitude of Reason, which both in general and in each of its nine specific forms is essentially immoral, <sup>105</sup> and steps out into the ethical substance, leaving behind once and for all what Hegel calls that "foul existence" of an individuality separated from society, state, art, and religion. <sup>106</sup>

This does not, of course, mean that it abandons the search for philosophical truth. The ethical substances "is the *essence* of self-consciousness", and if this were the whole story, then we should indeed conclude that we should abandon philosophising and simply allow ourselves to become naturally what we are in essence, allowing ourselves passively to be informed by the ethical substance. We could agree with Lao Tzu, that

"All this talk of goodness and duty, these perpetual principles, unnerve and irritate the hearer: nothing indeed could be more destructive of inner tranquility. (Lao Tzu, quoted by Oakeshott, op. cit. p.36).

This romantic view - which Oakeshott apparently endorses - must however, be offset against the fact that ethical substance equally essentially requires the subjective dimension of self-consciousness: "self-consciousness is the *actuality* and *existence* of the substance, its *self* and its *will*", (Phenomenology, p. 262). Spirit, in other words, is just as much subject as substance; and we may say that the central purpose of the entire discussion of Spirit in the Phenomenology is to bring to Antigone's immediate intuition of ethical substance the mediating moment

104. Ibid.

105. Cf. ETW, p. 224.

106. R.Siebert, 'Hegel's Concept of Marriage and Family' in Hegel's Social and Political Thought, D.P. Verne (ed.). Humanities Press 1976, p. 193.

of free, subjective self-conscious, and true knowledge, which is essential to, indeed, identical with, the realization of Spirit. The most important development of the Phenomenology is yet to come.

PART THREE

OBJECTIVE SPIRIT



In the Philosophy of Mind, Hegel introduces the notion of objective Spirit with these words:

"Objective Spirit is the Absolute Idea, but only existing *in posse*<sup>1</sup>: and as it is thus on the terrain of finitude its actual rationality retains the aspect of external apparency". (Philosophy of Mind, p. 241 §483.)

Before we consider the limitations of this form of the absolute Idea we may first consider its positive significance. Spirit, for Hegel, is essentially a manifestation of the absolute Idea in an objective form. In the previous chapter, Reason was led through its experience to acknowledge this existence. Hegel showed that Reason, which is commonly taken to be a particular faculty associated with the universal or the unconditioned aspect of thought, is in fact (or for natural consciousness) nothing less than all reality. This means that the truth of reason is the individual who is both real and ethical, and this existence of ethical substance in an actual individual is precisely Spirit.

In moving to Spirit, then, Reason has not turned to consider its relationship to other Reasons, as is sometimes suggested, but has acknowledged the reality of Spirit as an objective and true existence (though only phenomenal knowledge understands this as a manifestation of the absolute Idea). We should not, therefore, describe 'Spirit' as a solution to .

1. *In posse* carries a double meaning. On the one hand it means "potentially" - the opposite of "actually" or *in esse*. On the other hand it can mean in the form of something powerful or enforced - as in the Sheriff's posse. Hegel appears here to have the second meaning especially in mind: Spirit is not so much potential as potent.

"the problem of multiplicity of self-consciousness" or as dealing not so much with an 'I' or a *cogito* as 'we' or a *cogitamus*, or again as a view of human reality as a "transcendental intersubjectivity" or a Heideggerian *Mitsein*.<sup>2</sup> Such formulations imply too strongly the dominance of the subject, and make 'Spirit' into a mere afterthought which tackles some problems generated by previous stages of the Phenomenology at a more social level. Spirit, however, is not an afterthought but the essential reality, and the point of the Phenomenology so far has been to demonstrate the necessity of acknowledging this fact.

The existence of the Idea *in posse* Spirit i.e. in the form of objective law, is nevertheless inadequate to the idea of Spirit, which is freedom. Objective Spirit contains the notion of freedom, but

"Liberty, shaped into the actuality of a world, receives the form of Necessity, the deeper substantial nexus of which is the system or organization of the principles of liberty, whilst its phenomenal nexus is power or authority, and the sentiment of obedience is awakened in consciousness"  
(Philosophy of Mind, p. 240 §484)

Freedom, in order to be substantial, must take the objective form of law, (and law here must be understood in its general significance, to include *Nomos* and *Gesetz*, moral, civil, human, divine, natural, positive and any other form in which law may be said to *exist*, but not those abstract forms of law we have encountered in Understanding and Reason in which law has not yet achieved objective existence). At the level of Spirit, then, freedom becomes an object to itself, and achieves a substantial dimension which was absent from both self-consciousness and Reason.

2. All these views may be found in Hyppolite, op. cit. pp. 321-324.

However, for freedom to become not just substantial, but truly real, it must exist not only in the general form of a law, but also in a form which includes a subjective element, or which is individual. In the chapter on Spirit, Hegel addresses himself to the way in which the subjective element of freedom may be included in substantial freedom of law. There are two distinct senses in which the subjective element needs to be included; and in connection with each of these Hegel may be seen to be criticising Plato, who in his view grasps freedom only as substantial, not as subjective.<sup>3</sup>

In the first place, the subjective principle must be included within law itself. This must occur in two senses. Firstly, I must subjectively know the law. This means that it must be limited to general forms which I can know; whereas in the *polis* it existed as custom which I might not know.<sup>4</sup> This in turn means that law must be restricted and that there must be areas in which I know that I am free from law; and for this reason Hegel criticises Plato for extending the law over the whole community, whereas certain areas - for example the choice of a position

3. Hegel usually applies this criticism specifically to Plato, but he also means it as a general criticism of the life of the *polis*, and in particular also as a criticism of Aristotle. "Freedom of the self was not truly known by the Greeks, by Plato or Aristotle". (Quoted from Hegel's *Jena Realphilosophie* by Hyppolite, op. cit. p. 332).
4. Socrates, for example, did not know that he was liable to be condemned, but only that he was liable to offend custom. He was not charged with breach of a specific law. (See Plato "Apology" e.g. The Last Days of Socrates, Penguin 1969, p.47, p.54). As Foster (op. cit. p.113f) points out, this is what essentially distinguishes *Nomos* from *Gesetz*.

in the community - should rightly be left to the choice of the individual. Secondly, as well as knowing what the law is objectively, I must also know it as a moment of my own self. Law, in other words, must be complemented by conscience, and this principle is equally absent from Plato's state.<sup>5</sup> In general, this criticism may be expressed by saying that in Plato's view the state is perfect in so far as it embodies the form of justice, and it is not required that this form be known by its citizens.<sup>6</sup>

In the second place, the subjective principle must also transcend law, in the same sense that Hegel argued in the Spirit of Christianity and its Fate that love should transcend morality and legality. To include the principle of subjective freedom within the notion of law does not by itself overcome the fact that in law the Absolute exists only *in posse*. If the good appears in the form of justice it appears as something I *must* do, and this contradicts the essential freedom of Spirit. If Spirit is free, it must be capable of knowing the good as it is in and for itself, as an independent entity, while as justice it appears as something dependent, either upon the state, or upon the conscience of the individual.

5. These two dimensions correspond respectively to what Foster calls the 'economic' and 'moral' dimensions of subjective freedom. (Op.cit. p. 110ff) Hegel himself does not appear to distinguish them so sharply, and in the Philosophy of Right tends to complain generally of a want of subjective freedom in Plato, without making it clear more specifically or systematically what is meant by this. See Foster, op. cit. pp.101-109 for a catalogue of Hegel's references to Plato and to subjective freedom in the Philosophie des Rechts.
6. Cf. Plato, 'Meno', in Protagoras and Meno, Penguin 1956, p.148ff. As Foster points out, there are exceptions to this generalisation in Plato, and the subjective element does in fact appear in a limited form at certain points of Plato's work (Foster, op.cit., p. 76).

The good is only presented as a truly independent entity, a living being which I may freely *acknowledge*, in the forms of Art, Religion, and Philosophy.<sup>7</sup> This dimension is also absent from Plato's thought, in Hegel's view. It is true that a restricted and privileged class may contemplate the idea of the good in itself in Plato's Republic, but even in this case the good does not have an actual existence for itself, except in phenomenal forms such as justice which are thereby no longer the good itself, but particular manifestations of the good. In Hegel's thought, however, the good exists in and for itself in the form of Religion, and Hegel comments that

"It was not vouchsafed to Plato to go on so far as to say that as long as true religion did not spring up from the world and hold sway in political life, so long the genuine principle of the state could not come into actuality".  
(Philosophy of Mind, p. 290 §552.)

In addition to the freedom to know the good in the forms of law and conscience, then, I must also have the freedom to know the good as an independent <sup>existence</sup> which transcends the limited form of objective Spirit. The

7. Art, in Hegel's view is part of Religion in so far as it is a "representation of the Divine" or of "the Absolute", either consciously, in religious art, or implicitly, in so far as it represents beauty. (Philosophy of Mind, p. 293, §556; Introduction to Aesthetics, p. 7). In one sense art and religion are subordinate to philosophy. "Art, far removed from being the highest form of Spirit, acquires its real ratification only in philosophy (Introduction to Aesthetics, p.13). On the other hand philosophy only ratifies and "religion as such, and the state as such ... each contain the absolute truth; so that the truth, in its philosophical phase, is after all only in one of its forms". (Philosophy of Mind, p. 290 f, §552).

chapter of the Phenomenology on Spirit will attempt to show the necessity of these freedoms, in that order. Beginning with the substantial freedom of *Sittlichkeit*<sup>8</sup> it will refer natural consciousness firstly to the knowledge of the objective in Culture (*Bildung*), secondly to the notion of conscience in Morality (*Moralität*), and finally and ultimately to Religion.

This order of presentation is significantly different from that of the Philosophy of Mind and the Philosophy of Right, where objective Spirit is presented first as (positive) Law, secondly as Morality, and only finally as *Sittlichkeit*. If *Sittlichkeit* is the most concrete determination of objective Spirit, and is used in the same sense in both cases, then it seems at first sight that in this chapter of the Phenomenology Hegel has reversed his usual procedure. Instead of beginning with the most abstract determinations and moving towards the more concrete whole, he begins with the most concrete determinations and then moves to consider more abstract aspects of the whole. Rather than moving from certainty to truth, he begins with "The True Spirit",<sup>9</sup> and ends up in Morality with Spirit which is only "Certain of Itself".<sup>10</sup>

8. Miller translates *Sittlichkeit* as 'ethical order', and Wallace gives 'ethical life' (which means that *die Sittlichkeit* cannot be distinguished from *das Sittliche Leben* or 'social ethics' (which fails to distinguish the objective from the merely intersubjective 'social'). *Die Sitte* may be translated as 'custom' or 'habit' and relates in Hegel's opinion to the Greek '*ethos*'. (Natural Law, p.112).

9. Phenomenology, p. 266.

10. *Ibid*, p.364.



This difference, however, is not so great as may at first seem to be the case. *Sittlichkeit* in the Phenomenology is at first only an immediate truth,<sup>11</sup> and it is only through the mediating development of Culture and Morality that it will become a concrete truth which is known to be the ground of these abstract moments of it. In this sense, Hegel's procedure is no different from that in the rest of the Phenomenology and we may recall in this connection that sense-certainty or "immediate knowing" is also the general characteristic of all knowledge, so that Absolute Knowledge is after all only a mediated form of sensation. What we need to know, then, is the difference between the immediate *Sittlichkeit* of the Phenomenology and the mediated *Sittlichkeit* of the later works.

*Sittlichkeit* is essentially both objective, and ordered, and the difference between immediate and mediated *Sittlichkeit* may be seen in both of these aspects. Objectively, immediate *Sittlichkeit* is a system of individuals, groups and classes each of which is essentially related to and subordinate to the community as a whole.<sup>12</sup> In the mediated *Sittlichkeit* of the modern world, by contrast, the significance of individuals, groups, and classes is not limited to their significance for the community as a whole; and while they remain essentially part of the community as a whole, that is of *Sittlichkeit*, they nevertheless also have an independent aspect. The individual is not obliged to participate in political life, and is still acknowledged as essentially valid in his own right if he does not; and classes become estates which both have their own *raison d'être* independently of their purpose for the state, and also transcend the limitations of a

11. Ibid, p. 265.

12. Cf. Aristotle, Politics, Bk 1, Ch.2, op.cit. p. 29. This also applies to the objective aspect of modern *Sittlichkeit*: see Philosophy of Right, p. 259, Addition to §145.

particular political community - in the sense that 'chivalry', for example, is a universal code, which should be applied equally to members of different states.

From the point of view of the *order* of *Sittlichkeit*, this difference may be expressed by saying that the order of immediate *Sittlichkeit* is given as human and divine Law, while in the mediated *Sittlichkeit* of the modern world it is given as natural and civil Law - or as something similar.<sup>13</sup> The essential difference between these two principles of order can be expressed by saying that only the latter pair of principles of law contains a distinction between the public and the private.<sup>14</sup> The human law of the ancient world is the law of the community rather than the family, but its jurisdiction nevertheless extends over the whole community, and its central task is to maintain the balance of the parts of the community, including the family. Divine law, likewise, has its seat in the family, but nevertheless rules throughout the community. When we look at the way these two laws appear to natural consciousness we will see that each takes itself at first to be independent from and superior to the other, and learns on the contrary that each is equally essential.

13. In the Philosophy of Right, for example, Hegel distinguishes natural and positive law as the two basic aspects of the order of mediated *Sittlichkeit*; but the essential distinction is not changed. (Philosophy of Right, pp.14-20, p.134)

14. Norman (op.cit. p.82) falsely distinguishes the divine and human law as private and public - thus missing the central point of Hegel's discussion. The topic of *Sittlichkeit* becomes in his interpretation the conflict of the private individual with the state. Not surprisingly, then, he concludes that "The section is marred by Hegel's emphasis on the 'Antigone' example". (p. 86).

Natural law, although often associated with the Divine, differs from divine law in that it is generally held to apply in cases which do not come under the direct jurisdiction of civil law (although it is generally also held that civil law ought to be based upon or accord with the moral principle of natural law). This implies that civil law is equally limited to a distinct sphere of application, in contrast to human law which applies throughout the community. This sphere, which may be called 'public', corresponds to the aspect of individuals, groups, and classes which is subordinate to and dependent upon the state. Natural law, by contrast, governs the aspect of individuals, groups and classes which is independent of the state, or is private. Thus Foster, for example, concludes a discussion of the relationship of the classes of Plato's Republic to the estates of Hegel's Philosophy of Right with these words:

"Each estate in being freed from its unity with the other two is freed from its local limitation. The first becomes a catholic brotherhood, the second a world-wide chivalry, and the third a system of private property, safeguarded by a universal code of law. None of these societies is any longer political; each is based upon a law which is in one or other of the senses of the term, a *natural* law". (Foster, op.cit. p.67).

This distinction between public and private, between civil and natural law emerges first of all within *Sittlichkeit* itself in the form of *Rechtzustand*.<sup>14</sup> This is the attitude to law which is found especially in the Roman world. While the greek community was regarded as natural,<sup>15</sup> the Roman "state of law" is to be opposed to a state of nature, and consequently the positive law of the community to natural law.<sup>16</sup>

14. Phenomenology, p. 290. *Rechtzustand* may be translated as "legal status" or the "state of law".

15. Aristotle, Politics, loc. cit.

16. Natural Law, pp. 63-66.

However, although it is the distinction between positive or civil and natural law which leads natural consciousness to the realization of the subjective dimension of *Sittlichkeit*, this dimension is not exhausted in that distinction. Natural and positive law must be understood not as absolute distinctions, but as moments of Spirit, and Hegel sets out to show this in the chapters on Culture and Morality.

The movement of Culture, then, can be characterised as bringing back to the alien positive law the subjective moral element which is associated with natural law. Culture exhibits especially clearly the double movement of *Entausserung* and *Erinnerung* which characterises the whole Phenomenology. Positive law is an alien form which natural consciousness can become reconciled with only by alienating or externalising its own self.<sup>17</sup> However, this alienation has for us equally the opposite significance, that in alienating itself, natural consciousness is overcoming the alien form of positive law. From being the arbitrary dictate of the "lord of the world", law becomes intuited as the externalisation of ethical substance, which substance is the essence of the natural consciousness and the basis of the notion of natural law.<sup>18</sup>

The recollection of this externalisation, however, cannot take place until the externalisation is complete, and this does not occur in Hegel's view until after the French Revolution, which is the ultimate attempt to base positive law on natural right. The failure of the revolution shows that both aspects of law are equally essential, and leads in practice to a re-establishment of a developed *Sittlichkeit* which contains both principles,

17. Phenomenology, p.294f. Hegel uses both the terms *Entfremdung* and *Entausserung* here.

18. Phenomenology, p. 295.

and, yet as an individual and powerful ethical order (i.e. the Napoleonic state) transcends them both.<sup>19</sup> Through this experience natural consciousness discovers its own absolute freedom within the sphere of positive law which appeared at first to be its absolute limitation and condition. This absolute freedom, however, transcends the 'political' standpoint of Culture, and when it is taken in its own right as the relationship of the subjectively free individual to the ethical substance, it gives the third moment of Spirit, that is, Morality, and the notion of conscience.

Morality, which introduces the second aspect of subjective freedom, is in a sense a development of the notion of natural law. However, it has been shown to be an attitude which includes both aspects of Culture, - that is, the individual and the universal will<sup>20</sup> - and it is therefore not complementary to positive law, but above it.

Hegel's discussion of it sets out to show how morality, which takes itself to be purely subjective, is led to the recognition of the objective existence of evil, which is equally the notion of its forgiveness, since forgiveness is a reality only if evil is also a reality.<sup>21</sup> It thus returns to Antigone's acknowledgement of the actual existence of ethical substance. However, this acknowledgement is not merely intuitive, as it was in Antigone's case, but self-conscious, and the ethical substance is therefore not merely felt, but known.

19. *Phenomenology*, p. 361. (Hegel does not mention Napoleon by name, but the allusion is clear, and is made explicit in the *Philosophy of History*, p.451).
20. *Phenomenology*, p. 363. Cf. *History of Philosophy* Vol. 2, p.108: "Morals cannot be independent of institutions ... For institutions must be looked upon as the very first condition of morality, for this is the manner in which institutions are subjective".
21. Sin, in other words is inevitable or original: "only a stone is innocent". (*Phenomenology*, p. 282, cf. Hyppolite, op.cit. p.502 and *Romans* v-vii)

The notion of evil and its forgiveness, then, has the significance of being the atonement of all that has gone before. To acknowledge it is to discover

"God manifested in the midst of those who know themselves in the form of pure knowledge" (Phenomenology, p.409).

The Phenomenology, from this point is virtually over, and all that remains is to show the development of consciousness of absolute being in and for itself in the form of religion up to the point where this consciousness too is transformed into the knowledge of "The Revealed Religion"<sup>22</sup> - a development which, as has been said, we will not follow here.

Ultimately, then, in Hegel's view, the objective existence of the state is to be reconciled with the freedom of the individual through knowledge, morality, and religion. Hegel closes his discussion of objective Spirit in the Encyclopaedia with the following view of the union of these elements.

"Thus, ultimately, in the Protestant conscience the principles of the religious and of the ethical conscience come to be one and the same: the free spirit learning to see itself in its reasonableness and truth. In the Protestant state, the constitution and the code, as well as their several applications, embody the principle and the development of the moral life, which proceeds and can only proceed from the truth of religion, when reinstated in its original principle and in that way as such first become actual. The moral life of the state and the religious spirituality of the state are thus reciprocal guarantees of strength". (Philosophy of Mind, p. 291 §552) <sup>23</sup>

To demonstrate something like this is also the aim of the chapter of the Phenomenology on Spirit, and in connection with this we may recall Foster's general criticism of Hegel's Philosophy of Right.<sup>24</sup> This was, in a nutshell, that Hegel finds room in his rational state for subjective freedom

22. Phenomenology, p. 453.

23. cf Philosophy of Right, pp. 166ff.

24. Ch. 2 above; Foster, op.cit. eg. pp. 126-8.



at the "economic" level of desire (which would correspond roughly to the level of Culture here), and at the "moral" level of reason, i.e. conscience; but not at the level of the individual will which would correspond to self-consciousness or to the spirited element of the soul, since the individual will does not have in Hegel's state the significance of being a creative sovereign power.

If this criticism is to be accepted for the Philosophy of Right, then it must also be accepted here. There is no more room in the account of Spirit in the Phenomenology for the notion of a sovereign individual will than there is in the Philosophy of Right. In Hegel's view, culture will always display an opposition between the individual and universal will, which can never be overcome within culture itself, but only by taking up instead the attitudes of morality and religion. Subjective freedom, therefore, can be achieved in the same senses as it may be achieved in the Philosophy of Right, viz, through the knowledge of and limitation of the extent of the state, through the principle of conscience, and through religion, but never within the institutional structure of the state itself. In Foster's view, however, a modern and christian view of the state should be capable of accommodating the notion of popular sovereignty by giving the will of every single individual sovereign power in a popular assembly; while Hegel denies the validity of this notion of popular sovereignty.<sup>25</sup>

We may question, however, whether this criticism is valid in Hegel's own terms. Foster's case rests on the presumption that subjective freedom must be included at each of the three elements of the soul, and takes

25. Hegel explains exactly the extent to which he is prepared to accept the notion of "the sovereignty of the people" in Philosophy of Right, p. 182f.

these to be desire, self-consciousness, and Reason. As we have seen, however, this is mistaken, and the moments of Spirit for Hegel are in fact consciousness, self-consciousness, Reason, and Spirit. If we take it that Hegel's view is, or at least would be, that subjective freedom must be included at each of these levels, then we may conclude that this is indeed the case in both the Phenomenology and the Philosophy of Right. The subjective dimension of consciousness is satisfied in so far as it may know *Sittlichkeit*, which also means that *Sittlichkeit* must be specific and limited and that the individual is in certain respects free from it. Self-consciousness is satisfied in so far as through the experience of culture it discovers *Sittlichkeit* to be an externalised form of its own essence, and does not therefore experience it as a limitation upon its freedom, but as an expression of it. Foster's criticism in this respect may be said to rest on a rejection of this view of Hegel's and an assertion instead that anything which self-consciousness does not actually control is a limitation of its freedom - an assertion which displays the attitude of Lordship and Bondage but not of Freedom of Self-Consciousness. Reason, thirdly, is satisfied as it is in Foster's account, through the notion of conscience which allows it to be master of its own self to the point where it may give reasons for its own acknowledgement of the value of *Sittlichkeit* - though it may not go so far as to express *Sittlichkeit* as the result of these its subjective reasons, as do so many so-called "theories on the grounds of political obligation."<sup>26</sup> Finally, Spirit is satisfied through the acknowledgement of good and evil as actual living existences and ultimately as manifestations of God, so that it is able to relate to *Sittlichkeit* as one concretely free being

26. See D.D. Raphael, Problems of Political Philosophy, MacMillan 1976, pp. 78-114.

another, as Spirit to Spirit. It is arguable therefore, that far from remaining confined within a Platonic view which limits the freedom of the individual to the freedom to be informed by the objective good of the state Hegel succeeds in transcending this conception at every level of *Sittlichkeit*, and indeed, that to do so is the central aim of this passage of the Phenomenology.

CHAPTER SEVEN : *Die Sittlichkeit*

*Sittlichkeit*, as it first appears in the Phenomenology is "the simple substance of Spirit".<sup>1</sup> The subjective element which is explicitly a moment of *Sittlichkeit* in its developed form is only implicitly present here, and must be made explicit. The experience of *Sittlichkeit*, therefore must be shown to reveal that this subjective element is indeed essentially and necessarily part of *Sittlichkeit*.

For the active natural consciousness, *Sittlichkeit* appears in three aspects. Firstly it appears as an objective existence, an ethical world divided into distinct ethical substances; secondly as individuals who act ethically in that world; and finally as the principle of law governing the relation of individuals to the ethical world.<sup>2</sup>

Hegel presents this development through an account of Greek tragedy. He alludes to Aeschylus' Eumenides and Sophocles' Oedipus Rex, but focusses especially on Sophocles' Antigone, which, he appears to regard as a paradigm of ancient tragedy.<sup>3</sup> As he says in the Aesthetics,

1. Phenomenology, p. 267
2. Ibid, p. 266.
3. Aristotle also chooses to refer to Antigone several times in his Poetics, though we may presume that a much wider selection of Sophocles work was available to him than to us, since only seven of the 123 plays attributed to Sophocles by ancient sources have survived intact. (See B.Knox's introduction to Sophocles, The Three Theban Plays, trans. Fagles, Allen Lane 1982, p.13; see also p.21).

"Of all the glories of the ancient world - I know pretty well all of it, and one should and can know it - the Antigone appears to me in this respect as the most excellent and satisfying work of art" (Paolucci & Paolucci, op. cit. p. 74).

Hegel first considers the ethical situation of tragedy, that is, the ethical substance in the form of human and divine law. In so far as these are presented as things, they will appear to be discrete existences which can have no cause to conflict with each other, and seem therefore to be harmonious. Action, however, reveals that this attitude like Perception<sup>4</sup> is deceptive; and that human and divine law are not in fact discrete things, but moments of the ethical substance which therefore contain aspects of each other. They therefore conflict; and this conflict, which is the basis of tragedy, is the subject matter of the second moment of *Sittlichkeit*. The lesson which is learned from tragedy, that is, the experience gained from it, is that law is not in its essential truth conditioned, as it appears to be in the forms of human and divine law, but unconditioned and universal. This universal form of law appears first immediately in the positive law of the Roman world, and is the third and final moment of *Sittlichkeit*.

This realization has, more concretely than any previous experience, the significance of having been an actual movement in the historical realization of Spirit; namely, the collapse of the Greek *polis* and the emergence of the Roman order.

"In point of fact, the ethical substance has developed through this process into actual self-consciousness: in other words, this particular self has become the actuality of what it is in essence; but precisely in this development the ethical order has been destroyed". (Phenomenology, p. 266). 5

4. Phenomenology, p. 267.

5. Cf. Philosophy of History, p. 106f.

Indeed, as we shall see, Hegel effectively goes so far as to argue that the experience of tragedy is itself instrumental in the collapse of the *polis* - though of course a full explanation of such an event would have to include an account of historical details, especially in this case the actions of Alexander the Great<sup>6</sup> which effectively brought the days of the city-state to an end in practice.<sup>7</sup>

6. Hegel discusses Alexander in the Philosophy of History, pp.271-4, and apparently alludes to him on p. 289 of the Phenomenology.
7. See E. Barker, Greek Political Theory, Methuen 1960 p. 24.



## (a) Human and Divine Law

Human law is in Hegel's view straightforward. It exists in "the light of day", and there is no need to go into any detailed analysis or interpretation of it, since it is simply the prevailing law and custom of the community which is known without complication by all its members.

"In the form of universality, it is the *known* law, and the prevailing custom; in the form of individuality it is the actual certainty of itself in the individual as such, and the certainty of itself as a simple individuality is that Spirit as government. Its truth is the authority which is openly accepted and manifest to all; a *concrete existence* which appears for immediate certainty in the form of an existence that has freely issued forth". (Phenomenology, p. 267f).

Human law alone, however, is not enough to constitute an ethical community. If it is to be more than merely arbitrary, the law and custom which merely happen to exist, then it must have a substantial ethical basis. This is provided by divine law, which is

"the inner Notion or general possibility of the ethical sphere in general, but on the other hand equally contains within it the moment of self-consciousness". (Phenomenology, p. 268).

In this sense divine law is to human law what natural law is to civil law<sup>9</sup>, that is, its moral basis. However, human law differs from civil law in so far as its jurisdiction extends over the whole community and does not leave any specific sphere to the individual; and divine law likewise differs from natural law in that it is not the law of the individual, but the law of the family. Furthermore, if the law of the family from one point of view complements human law, in so far as it actually exists it stands opposed to the human law.

9. For example, in Hobbes, Leviathan, op. cit. p. 223f.

"The Family, as the *unconscious* still inner Notion of the ethical order stands opposed to its actual, self-conscious existence; as the *element* of the nation's actual existence, it stands opposed to the nation itself; as the *immediate* being of the ethical order it stands over against that order which shapes and maintains itself by working for the universal; the Penates stand opposed to the universal Spirit" (Phenomenology, p. 268).

Divine law is by no means so straightforward as human law. It is "locked up in the darkness of the nether regions",<sup>10</sup> and is not known in any philosophical or subjective sense, but only revealed through seers and Oracles. Plato therefore declines to give an account of it in the Republic, and instead simply acknowledges its authority as follows:

"Then, what is there left for us to do in the way of legislation?

For us, nothing; but there are institutions of the highest worth and importance that must be left to the Delphian Apollo

What are they?

The founding of temples, sacrifices, and the cults of gods, demigods, and heroes; the burial of the dead, and services to propitiate the powers of the other world. These are matters we do not understand ourselves, and in founding our commonwealth we shall be wise to consult no other religious authority than our national divinity. Indeed in religious matters, the authority of this god, from his seat at the very navel of the earth, may be said to extend to all mankind." (Plato, Republic, 427b; Cornford op. cit. p. 115f).

Hegel, however, is less deferent, for reasons which he explains in the Encyclopaedia:

"the summons to the Greeks of the Delphic Apollo, *Know thyself*, does not have the meaning of a law externally imposed on the human Spirit by an alien power; on the contrary, the god who impels to self-knowledge is none other than the absolute law of Spirit itself" (Philosophy of Mind, p.1 §377).

10. Phenomenology, p. 280.

The divine law too, then, must be open to self-conscious knowledge, and need not be merely fatalistically accepted; and Hegel sets out in the Phenomenology to show how its truth may be revealed to experience. This involves discussing the structure of the family, in which divine law is seated.

It is important to be clear that Hegel's discussion of the family here focusses on its objective side, and not on the subjective element of feeling. He is concerned with the way the structure of the family conditions the actions of its members, and not with the subjective motivations individuals have for actions involving the family, i.e. love.

"because the ethical principle is intrinsically universal, the ethical connection between the members of the Family is not that of feeling, or the relationship of love".  
(Phenomenology, p. 209).

Love, within the confines of the family, is after all secondary to the duty required by the family itself. Antigone's explanation for her devotion to her dead brother is not 'I love him', but "I know my duty, where true duty lies".<sup>11</sup>

The opposition between human and divine law therefore, should not be taken as a conflict between abstract or positive right and love. We are not on the same ground as the Early Theological Writings, where Hegel upheld Christian love as higher than both moral law in the form of commandments, and positive civil law. Here, right or duty and love are not opposed. In the human law, the notion of right is more or less entirely absent. The individual in immediate *Sittlichkeit*, and in the actual ethical life of the *polis*, cannot be said to have any rights, if

11. Antigone, L.103, from Sophocles, The Theban Plays, trans. Watling, Penguin, 1947, p.129.

a right is something which is guaranteed to him automatically, in every case, and without his having to participate in the political life of the community in order to obtain it. Rights and duties, in other words, belong to positive law, and in immediate *Sittlichkeit* are submerged in custom. Only in divine law does the individual have rights, and these are always connected not with the family, not the state. They include rights of inheritance and succession, and, above all, burial rights. These are granted universally, that is irrespective of any peculiarity or action on the part of the individual,<sup>12</sup> by the family whose duty it is to fulfil them; and this duty is not opposed to love but, if anything, higher than it. The subjective side of love, which includes its physical aspect, is subordinate to and conditioned by the law of the family<sup>13</sup> - or, in so far as it is homosexual, to the law of the community.<sup>14</sup>

It is mistaken, therefore, to attribute to Hegel in this context the view that "the family as such has love for its essential determination".<sup>15</sup> Love, in Hegel's view, is a subjective feeling, and as such it is independent of the family. It follows that it is not possible to deduce the family from the notion of love, or to make love the cause of the family; and it is rather objective Spirit as a whole which forms and conditions subjective love. The fact that, from the point of view of objective Spirit, love is of little concern, however, has not prevented some commentators from putting it at the centre of their interpretation of

12. Phenomenology, p. 269: cf Charles Taylor, *op.cit.* p.173.

13. See Philosophy of Right, p.262f, additions to §§159, 161, 162 163, 164 and 165.

14. See Plato, Republic 468b; Plato's Symposium, and H. Ellis', The Psychology of Sex, Heinemann 1933, p.189 and p.278.

15. R. Siebert, "Hegel's Concept of Marriage and Family: The Origin of Subjective Freedom" in Hegel's Social and Political Thought, Humanities Press 1980, p.178.

Spirit, and before we return to Hegel's account we may consider a particularly sophisticated example of such an interpretation which has been put forward by Kojève.

Love, in Kojève's account, is essentially the desire for recognition, posed at a more concrete level. It thus reproduces the contradictions of Lordship and Bondage. In love, the individual seeks recognition from the lover in two contradictory senses: (a) unconditionally, or universally in virtue of what he simply is, and (b) conditionally or specifically, in virtue of what he does and of his specific qualities.

In immediate *Sittlichkeit*, these two aspects of love become separated. The unconditional aspect of love becomes the basis of the family: "a mother loves her son in spite of his faults".<sup>16</sup> The second aspect is then the foundation of the basic relationship of the political life of the community, in which individuals relate to each other as independent beings who seek "admiration" or "recognition"<sup>17</sup> from their fellow citizens. This leads to a conflict between family and community which is the basis of Greek tragedy. The family, since it is concerned only with the simple being of its members, requires above all that they stay alive. The political community, by contrast, is concerned with the actions of its members, and action involves risk, ultimately the risk of life in war. This risk, in Kojève's account, is not based upon any patriotic love, but on the master slave relationship, since the citizen had to be ready to prove that he 'feared slavery more than death'. This courage is both a condition and the cardinal virtue of his citizenship,

16. Kojève, from Leo Strauss op.cit. p.165.

17. Ibid.

and to fail to exhibit it is to cease to be a free citizen and instead to become a slave.

The citizen thus feels a contradictory tension: from equally valid points of view he is told to risk nothing, and to risk everything. This tension serves not only to explain tragedy, but also the political decline of the *polis*. The tension, as it stands, gives the impulse towards what Aristotle called deviant constitutions,<sup>18</sup> and in particular to tyranny. The tyrant seeks to overcome the tension between family and community by making the state his own property, and therefore also the property of his family. Nevertheless, he cannot easily achieve this, since the community is not yet a discrete entity which could be possessed, is not a state in the modern sense of the word. Furthermore, if he succeeds in making the interest of the family the interest of the state, he is still subject to the law that the citizen must be courageous, so long as the community is still divided into masters and slaves. The 'corruption' of tyranny can have a positive result, therefore, only if it succeeds both in establishing a new political form and if it breaks down the universality of the relation of master and slave. This is done by Alexander, who "succeeded where Alcibiades had failed",<sup>19</sup> in founding an empire, in which conquered people were no longer enslaved, but dissolved into a new political unity.<sup>20</sup>

However, while this account may have some value, it cannot in general terms be squared with Hegel's. It is true that, in Hegel's view, "love

18. Aristotle, Politics, Bk.III, Ch. 7.

19. Kojève, in Leo Strauss, op.cit., p. 180.

20. Ibid, p. 181.



is the most tremendous contradiction",<sup>21</sup> but this is only the case when it is seen from the standpoint of Understanding,<sup>22</sup> which

"cannot resolve it since there is nothing more stubborn than this point of self-consciousness which is negated and which nevertheless I ought to possess as affirmative". (Philosophy of Right, p. 261 f, addition to §158).

From the standpoint of Spirit, however, the contradiction is resolved, or rather

"Love is at once the propounding and the resolving of this contradiction. As the resolving of it, love is the unity of an ethical type". (ibid).

This is because Spirit does not attempt to explain love by reducing it to a manifestation of self-consciousness, but instead acknowledges its independence, and seeks only to know how it is formed by the structures of objective Spirit. In Kojève's account, divine law is reduced to familial love which in turn is reduced to self-consciousness, while in Hegel's account the divine law is an actual existence, and the structure of the family and the further moments of love and recognition are only

21. Philosophy of Right, p. 261, Addition to §158.

22. In this connection we may also recall Freud's view, which 'Understands' civilization in a way very similar to Kojève, as a conflict between the life and death instincts, Eros and Thanatos.

moments which may be abstracted from it, not in any sense its causes.<sup>23</sup>

Hegel explains the family teleologically, in terms of its end, which itself is a realization of ethical substance.<sup>24</sup> It has both negative and positive ends or purposes. The negative end of the family, what is is not, is its relationship to the community, and

"consists in expelling the individual from the Family, subduing the natural aspect and separateness of his existence, and training him to be virtuous, to a life in and for the universal". (Phenomenology, p. 269).

The family, then, is not a self subsistent entity, but requires the community in order to exist: without the community the family has no purpose.<sup>25</sup>

The positive end of the family, what it is in its own right, is the individual as universal, or irrespective of particular qualities or attributes.

23. It may be that Kojève is attempting to do more than simply reduce divine law to the relations of the family, and in trying also to proceed from family relationships to divine law. This approach has been suggested by Marx, and Kojève may have Marx in mind. (cf. note to Ch.2, or Kojève op.cit. p.32). In Capital, Marx wrote "It is in reality much easier to discover by analysis the earthly core of the misty creations of religion, than, conversely, it is, to develop from the actual relations of life the corresponding celestialised forms of those relations. The latter method is the only materialistic and therefore the only scientific one". (Capital Vol.I op.cit. p.352). If divine law can be 'developed' from self-consciousness, however, it follows that it is contained within it, and such an account is therefore just as reductionist as its reverse. If the divine exists, Marx's "scientific method" will not be able to reach it, while if it does not, Marx's method will be unable to conceive it.

24. Phenomenology, p.266.

25. In the historical period Hegel is alluding to, the family and the community had only recently been distinguished as moments of objective Spirit, earlier Greek societies being essentially patriarchies which elide this distinction. See E.Barker, Greek Political Theory, op.cit. p.26ff).

"The *positive* End peculiar to the Family is the individual as such" (Phenomenology, p. 269).

If this is true, then it follows that any action which the family does for the sake of its members which is to be truly ethical - that is to count as the duty of the family - must be related not to any accidental characteristic of a particular individual, but to the essential individuality which is characteristic of all particular individuals.

"The content of the ethical action must be substantial or whole and universal: therefore it can only be related to the *whole* individual or to the individual *qua* universal". (ibid).

The positive end of the family may be regarded as the teleological or final cause of the various forms of familial or divine law - which are perhaps better known to us as taboos - and Hegel goes on in a striking and much admired<sup>26</sup> passage to elucidate them thus.

If the ethical end of the family is the individual as such, it cannot be at the same time the welfare of its members. Welfare, that is, is accidental, not essential to the family.<sup>27</sup> Any action which the family carries out for the benefit of its members is subject to limitations. It may fail to have the desired effect, but on the other hand, if it does have the desired effect then action is no longer needed, and the

26. C.Taylor, op. cit. p.173; A.C. Bradley "Hegel's Theory of Tragedy" in Paolucci and Paolucci, Hegel on Tragedy, Harper & Row 1975, p.367.

27. Welfare - as we saw earlier (Phenomenology p.255; p 255f above) is an essential dimension of love, and in making it accidental to the family Hegel is thereby also making love inessential to divine law.

family loses its purpose. If welfare is the end of the family, then the family is dependent for its existence upon the contingency that its members need its help; but if the family is indeed essential, then it must be understood to exist necessarily and independently of such contingencies. If the individual as such is the end of the family, then any action the family carries out on his behalf must be related not to any particular aspect of his being, but his being in general, the individual qua universal. The living individual, however, is always a particular being, and becomes universal only in death, which takes away the contingency of his natural being, and leaves only the universal form of the memory of his existence, his existence as a member of the community of the dead.

The true purpose of the family, then, is in Hegel's account fulfilled only in the death rites and burial ceremonies it carries out on behalf of its dead members.<sup>29</sup>

28. cf. Natural Law, p.91, where Hegel equates death, or the ability to die, with pure freedom (cf. Romans vii, 7-8). "Death is the absolute subjugator" (ibid), and in the modern world this is acknowledged in so far as the burial ceremony is essentially the same (though perhaps more or less grand) for each individual. This was not necessarily the case in earlier historical periods in which in Hegel's account the knowledge of freedom was not yet universal. The ancient Chinese emperors, for example, merited very individual burial ceremonies, sometimes involving the slaughter of their entire personal staff who would be entombed along with them; and the Egyptian Pharaohs were similarly privileged.

29. Hegel gives a more precise account of these duties in §452 of the Phenomenology, p.270f.

"This last duty thus constitutes the perfect divine law; or the positive ethical action towards the individual. Every other relationship to him which does not remain one simply of love but is ethical, belongs to human law and has the negative significance of raising the individual above his confinement within the natural community to which he in his natural existence belongs". (Phenomenology, p.271).

If death rites are the perfect divine law, we may also conclude that the converse is also true, that is, that a murder committed within the family, such as Oedipus' parricide, would be the ultimate crime against it, or the ultimate taboo. It may at first seem that divine law is powerless to punish such transgressions, and the dead individual powerless to strike back. Lacking the physical power of the state, it may appear as Hobbesian natural law to be like a "Covenant without the Sword", "of no strength to secure a man at all".<sup>30</sup> This, however, will turn out to be illusory, and even the dead individual "is not without power".<sup>31</sup>

"The individual himself is the power of the nether world, and it is *his* Erinys, *his* 'fury' which wreaks vengeance. For his individuality, his blood, still lives on in the household, his substance has an enduring reality". (Phenomenology, p.277).

Human law, and its individual form, government, relates to divine law, and its individual form, the family, in the following way. Government allows the individual who is a member of the family to take a specific and acknowledged individual form as a member of the state. The individual as such, that is to say, exists only on the foundation of actual individuals who cannot exist except as members of one or other of the various classes

30. Hobbes, Leviathan, op.cit. p.223.

31. Phenomenology, p.273.

of the state, as men, women, slaves, artisans, citizens and so on. It is likewise the basis of the organised system of needs and the system of property which are equally essential to the existence of the family. However, from this point of view it may seem that government exists only to serve the ends of the family, whereas the truth is rather that is independent of the family, and the family by contrast can exist only by the grace of the community.

"In order not to let them [i.e. the various parts of the community] become rooted and set in isolation, thereby breaking up the whole and letting the communal spirit evaporate, government has from time to time to shake them to their core by war". (Phenomenology, p.272).

Government, then, asserts its independence by demanding the individual's life, and in so far as it succeeds it proves that it does not exist merely for the individual's benefit. However, we can see that this also has the opposite significance, since it is death, the power of divine law, which has made the individual feel his dependence on the community, and it follows that far from being independent,

"The community therefore possesses the truth and the confirmation of its power in the essence of the Divine Law and in the realm of the nether world". (Phenomenology, p.273)

Human and divine law, in other words, both seem from certain points of view to be independent of each other, yet each in fact needs the other, and both are rightly understood only abstract moments of the ethical substance of Spirit.

It remains to be seen how this may be experienced by natural consciousness. It is apparent that since human and divine law appear as distinct entities, they may each require specific actions from the individuals under their jurisdiction, but that since they are not in truth distinct but related to each other, it is also possible that their claims will conflict, and



that the claims of both will be in their own terms right. A conflict of right against right, duty against duty, is in Hegel's view comic.<sup>32</sup> It is arbitrary, and does not involve fate. As Hegel says in Natural Law

"comedy so separates the two zones of ethical life that it allows each to proceed entirely on its own, so that in the one the conflicts and the finite are shadows without substance, while in the other the Absolute is an illusion". (Natural Law, p.108).

However, if this same conflict is regarded as a conflict not of ethical laws but of ethical characters who identify themselves with those laws, then it becomes tragedy, which involves the experience of fate, which experience can have the positive significance of reconciling the individual with the Absolute.<sup>33</sup>

"*Tragedy* consists in this, that the ethical nature segregates its inorganic nature (in order not to become embroiled in it), as a fate, and places it outside itself; and by acknowledging this fate in the struggle against it, ethical nature is reconciled with the Divine being as the unity of both". (Natural Law, p.105).

It is the tragic experience, therefore, which will be of value. In

32. As, for example, in Aristophanes' Lysistrata. Let us note here that in so far as ancient drama deals with a conflict of ethical forces, these forces are always human and divine law. It is quite anachronistic, therefore, to interpret it as expressing a conflict between the individual and the state, natural and civil law, feminine pacifism with masculine aggression, or any other modern opposition.
33. Tragedy, which corresponds to stoicism, is in Hegel's account prior to comedy, which corresponds to scepticism. (Phenomenology, p.449f, Hyppolite, op. cit. p.186).

order to understand it, we will need to look more closely at the notion of ethical character as it is expressed in divine law. through the various relationships of the family.

There are three essential relationships within the family, of husband and wife, parents and children, and brothers and sisters. The first of these relationships is not purely ethical, since it comes into being only as a result of the contingent premise that two individuals happen to be attracted to each other.

"the relation of husband and wife is in the first place one in which one consciousness immediately recognises itself in another, and in which there is knowledge of this mutual recognition. Because this recognition is a natural and not an ethical one, it is only a representation, an image of Spirit, not actually Spirit itself" (Phenomenology, p.273).

The relationship between parents and children, on the other hand, is not a natural relationship, but one which exists only through and because of the family. One does not create it, but is born into it, and in this sense it is independent. Nevertheless it is still tainted by particularly, firstly, from the parents' point of view, by the fact that the child represents the union which they cannot achieve on their own, so that they have their own personal stake in the relationship; and secondly, from the point of view of the child, because as a child he is dependent on the family and he must break this dependence in order to become an individual in his own right. Because of this need for the child to become independent, any aspect of physical love within this relationship which would aim at achieving a union, rather than the separation which is necessitated by Spirit, is directly opposed to the Divine Law. Incest between parents and children is strongly taboo.

The relationship between brother and sister is a calmer affair. They cannot achieve any more solid or objective relationship than the one they are born into, and neither does it have any inherent need to develop or decay. "Therefore, they do not desire each other";<sup>35</sup> since they cannot hope to achieve any higher unity than the one they already have, and since as brother and sister they have no individual personality which they could surrender to each other to form such a union.<sup>36</sup> The taboo against incest between brother and sister, however, is less strong than the taboo between parents and children, since to offend it is merely to act irrelevantly, to seek a union which already exists; while to offend the latter taboo is to resist a development which is required by Spirit.

Brother and sister, however, are not in Hegel's view equivalent, since only the brother will enter the life of the community, where he "acquires the right of desire and, at the same time, preserves his freedom in regard to it".<sup>37</sup> The sister remains within the sphere of the family, and she retains a pure, but by the same token immediate and undeveloped relation

35. Phenomenology, p.274.

36. Philosophy of Right, p. 115 §168. See also Phenomenology, p.85. In connection with another version of this argument, Goethe commented "I should think that the love of a sister for her sister would be still purer and more sexless! And we should not forget that there have been innumerable cases in which, known and unknown, the most sensual affection occurred between brother and sister" (quoted in Kaufmann, op.cit. p.166). Hegel's argument, however, is by no means that physical considerations prevent incest between siblings, and he expressly criticises this view in the Philosophy of Right (loc.cit.). On the contrary, a taboo is much more than a mere absence of desire, and presupposes rather some desire which is to be prohibited. Divine law is concerned precisely with the regulation of existing desire to accord with the objective and highly restrictive structures of the family, and Goethe's rather glib comment misses this essential point.

37. Phenomenology, p.275. cf. Philosophy of Right, p.263, Addition to §164.

to *Sittlichkeit* and "has the highest *intuitive* awareness of what is ethical"<sup>38</sup>. She is concerned directly with the members of the family in their universal significance as its members, that is, as husband, brother, son, daughter, etc. irrespective of any of their individual characteristics. Since her relation to her brother is the purest of these ethical relationships,

"the loss of the brother is therefore irreparable to the sister and is the highest". (Phenomenology, p.275)

As Antigone herself said,

"A husband dead, there might have been another.  
A child by another, too, if I had lost the first.  
But mother and father both lost in the halls of Death,  
No brother could ever spring to light again".  
(Antigone, l. 910) 39

The notion of ethical character is complete when the essential difference between the brother and sister as followers respectively of human and divine law is regarded equally as a natural difference, as the result not only of something ethical, but also of the different "originally determinate natures"<sup>40</sup> of men and women.<sup>41</sup> If man is defined as by nature follower of human law, and woman as by nature follower of divine law, then the separation of the two into discrete beings is pushed to its

38. Phenomenology, p.274

39. This translation is from Sophocles, The Three Theban Plays, trans Fagles, Allen Lane 1982, p.88.

40. Phenomenology, p.276: cf p.238

41. Hegel stresses in several places that there is no reason for the assignation of human law to man and divine law to women, so that it is in truth essentially arbitrary.

extreme, and the falsity of this separation becomes something which may be experienced by these ethical characters as the fatal destruction of what they took to be their essential being.<sup>42</sup> Further, since the rigid separation of human and divine law depends upon their being regarded passively as discrete things, and since character on the other hand is essentially active, it follows that ethical character not only may but necessarily will experience this its fate.

To demonstrate this, and thereby to force each of the individual ethical characters to acknowledge the validity of the other, is the purpose of the second moment of *Sittlichkeit*, ethical action.

## (b) Ethical Action

The specific inadequacy in the harmony of the ethical order, that is, the failing which will be experienced by natural consciousness, is that it has no place for the principle of particular individuality, which is nevertheless as we know an essential moment of Spirit. *Sittlichkeit* contains both the elements of universality and particularity in both human and divine law, but these elements are always separated, not merely in theory (as we might say they are in Kant's ethics) but in practice the life and structure of the community, and do not come together in a particular individual.

"The way in which the antithesis is constituted in the ethical realm is such that self-consciousness has not yet received its due as a particular individuality. There it has the value, on the one hand, merely of the universal will, and on the other, of consanguinity. *This* particular individual counts only as a shadowy unreality". (Phenomenology, p.279).

Particular individuality, moreover, is not merely absent from the ethical world, but absent in a positive way, so that its absence may be felt. In tragic drama, particular individuality is not simply not present, but is absent in a way which conditions the whole drama.<sup>42</sup> This may be seen in the way in which the notion of character is used in tragedy. Individual

42. Sartre (Being and Nothingness, op.cit. p.10) distinguishes a real absence from an abstract absence. The absence of his friend Pierre from the cafe where he was expected to be is a real absence which conditions the perception of the whole scene, whereas the absence of the Duke of Wellington in the same circumstances has no such effect. Hegel's distinction here is similar, but differs in that a real absence for him is not so much an absence of something which an individual arbitrarily happens to be looking for, a perceived absence, but an absence of a principle which is in fact an essential moment of Spirit, which therefore must necessarily be present, and which the individual (obeying Appollo's command "know thyself") *must* be looking for - a necessity which appears here as destiny.



characters are used, and in some cases are quite vividly portrayed, but character is inessential and subordinate to the essential principle of action.<sup>43</sup> In contrast to some modern tragedies, such as Hardy's, which are essentially descriptions of character, in ancient tragedy

"they do not act in order to portray the Characters; they include the Characters for the sake of action ... a tragedy is impossible without action, but there may be one without character". (Aristotle, Poetics, 1450a)

In so far as character is present in ancient drama, and means something more than the contingent characteristics of a particular individual, it is defined not subjectively but objectively, by the two ethical powers.<sup>44</sup> Characters are distinguished essentially as followers of either divine<sup>45</sup> or of human law - but not of both. They are subjectively free only in the limited sense that they may choose in a limited sense to value one principle higher than another. At the beginning of Antigone, for example, Ismene chooses to obey the human law rather than the divine law; but as a woman her essence lies in divine law and she later acknowledges this, and it is clear that she obeyed the human law only out of fear, and does not acknowledge it in any fuller sense.<sup>46</sup>

43. Aristotle, Poetics, 1450a . As Hegel points out, in Greek drama, but not in modern theatre, masks may be used to conceal the individual features of the actors; yet, at the same time, these masks were not simply abstract, but often incorporated, very individual characteristics of the people they represented. (Paolucci and Paolucci, op.cit. p.39).

44 In one sense, character must always be defined as objective: It is the direct opposite of the subjective principle of "Gemuth", the feeling heart. (Philosophy of History, p. 350f).

45. Phenomenology, p.280.

46. Antigone, 1.79 and 1.535.

Once the characters are committed to their respective ethical powers, their individuality is of no importance, and they have no choice but to follow the dictates of their ethical law.<sup>47</sup> This fact must account in large part for the formal precision of Greek tragedy, and its sense of completeness which is rarely a characteristic of modern literature.<sup>48</sup> As Aristotle put it, a tragedy is an imitation of an action that is complete in itself, and

"A whole is that which has a beginning, a middle, and an end"  
(Aristotle, Poetics, 1450b).

The characters in ancient tragedy then, are essentially good,<sup>49</sup> (unlike Macbeth, for example, who deserved his fate), but not essentially moral, since in their own eyes they have no choice but to obey their respective ethical powers. However, in the experience of tragedy they will discover the principle of evil also within themselves, and that they therefore have a real choice between good and evil.<sup>50</sup> They lose their child-like innocence and move towards the Christian adulthood which begins with the recognition of the principle of original sin. They discover that

"innocence is merely non-action, like the mere being of a stone, not even that of a child". (Phenomenology, p. 282).

Oedipus' guilt, then, is not that of a wrong which might have been avoided, that of "a simpleton",<sup>51</sup> but

"the most exalted form of guilt, the guilt of innocence"  
(Phenomenology, p. 233).

and Oedipus (in Oedipus at Colonus)

47. Cf. A.C. Bradley in Paolucci and Paolucci, op. cit. p. 374.

48. Existentialist literature sometimes provides an exception to this rule, and this is often connected with either the absence of the principle of character (for example in Pauline Réage's Story of O) or its destruction (for example, in Sartre's Nausea).

49. Aristotle, Poetics, 1454a.

50. "Subjective freedom", Hegel said, "is the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil" (History of Philosophy, Vol. I, p. 446). Cf. also Philosophy of Right, p. 102n.

51. History of Philosophy, Vol. 1. p. 445.

"resembles Adam, loosing his happiness when he obtains the knowledge of good and evil". (Quoted from the Aesthetics by Paulucci and Paolucci, op. cit. p.xxvi). 52

It is the emergence of this principle of unhappiness which is Hegel's central concern in this section of the Phenomenology. We may note in this connection both that Hegel is not attempting here anything like a full account of tragedy, such as the account he gives the Aesthetics, and that his account also has wider significance than being simply an interpretation of tragedy. It is, namely, an account of the origins of philosophy itself in the decline of the Greek spirit. Hegel described the Greeks as the happy people of history, in contrast to the Jews who are history's unhappy people; and the breaking down of the harmony of the Greeks' life in tragedy is the end of their happiness, and the beginning of true philosophy. "Bifurcation is the source of the need for philosophy",<sup>53</sup> Hegel wrote at Jena, as we have seen already. Or, as Augustine put it, "there is no need to philosophise, except with a view to happiness".<sup>54</sup>

52. According to Freud, St. Paul makes a crime similar to Oedipus' the root of original sin: "It is because we killed God the father that we are so unhappy"; and Jesus' sacrifice is the atonement of this crime. (Freud, Moses and Monotheism, Hogarth 1939, p.213) Socrates' sacrifice may similarly be regarded as an atonement for the guilt of the Greeks. (Cf. Paolucci and Paolucci, op.cit. p.363f).
53. Plant, op.cit. p.79.
54. Schumacher, Guide to the Perplexed, frontispiece.

Socrates may be described in this context as the first true philosopher.

As Hegel wrote in the Philosophy of History,

"it was in *Socrates*, that at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War, the principle of subjectivity - of the absolute inherent independence of Thought - attained free expression. He taught that man has to discover and recognise in himself what is the Right and Good, and that this Right and Good is in its nature universal. Socrates is celebrated as a Teacher of Morality, but we should rather call him the *Inventor of Morality*. The Greeks had a *customary* morality; but Socrates undertook to teach them what moral virtues, duties, etc. were. The moral man is not he who merely wills and does that which is right - not the merely innocent man - but he who has the consciousness of what he is doing". (Philosophy of History, p.269).

If it is true that the origin of this thinking is to be found in the loss of innocence which finds expression in tragedy, then we may also expect that such thought will also seek in some way to overcome the disharmony of tragedy, and to recapture the happiness which is lost in it. As will be argued later, it is especially important to bear this in mind in connection with Plato's Republic, which may be interpreted precisely as a political scheme which attempts, *per impossibile*, to prevent the conflict of human and divine law.

For the active ethical consciousness, human and divine law are distinguished as the known and the unknown, just as from the point of view of substance they are distinguished as the conscious and the unconscious. <sup>55</sup> However, if from the point of view of substance it was the divine law which represented the force of the unconscious, for the active consciousness both human and divine law have known and unknown aspects.

55. Phenomenology, p.280.

"Since it sees right only on one side and wrong on the other, that consciousness which belongs to the divine law sees in the other side only the violence of human caprice, while that which holds to human law sees in the other only the self-will with disobedience of the individual who insists in being his own authority". (Phenomenology, p.280).

It is impossible, however, for one character at this stage to know both laws at the same time, since one cannot be both a man and a woman. The exception to this rule is the blind prophet Tiresias. According to various legends, Tiresias had once been turned into a woman, and then returned to his original sex, whereupon he gained the gift of prophesy. He is also credited with a special knowledge of the underworld, either through his mother, the nymph Chariclo, or more significantly for us, through being the only one to have "kept his wits"<sup>56</sup> in the underworld, to have avoided being immersed in the waters of oblivion.<sup>57</sup> With this experience and this 'recollection' behind him, then, he is uniquely placed to foresee the fatal collision of human and divine law in tragic destiny.

We saw earlier that the substance of divine law, which expresses itself positively as a duty towards the dead members of the family, can be expressed negatively as a prohibition especially of incest and of murder within the family. Expressed thus it is identical to what Freud calls the "Oedipus complex", and since Hegel here makes it explicit that the

56. Plato, Meno, 100A, Penguin 1956, p.157 - reporting the Homeric legend.

57. See Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1974, Macropaedia Vol.X p.1 for a brief account of some of the legends associated with Tiresias.

divine law like the Oedipus complex is unconscious, we can hardly avoid comparing the two author's accounts of the Oedipus legend, before going on to consider tragic action itself.

The essential difference between the two accounts, which are otherwise virtually identical, may be expressed in their differing views of the significance of guilt. Freud's attitude, as has already been said, belongs essentially to Understanding, and he therefore sets out to 'explain' guilt. In order to do this he sets out an imaginary scenario of a 'primal horde' dominated by a single male, in which the subordinate males, the brothers, once collectively murdered and ate their 'primal father', in order to gain sexual access to their sisters which previously was the father's privilege, and subsequently suffered guilt for the murder and for their incestuous desires. This original action is then imprinted in some kind of race memory, or passed on telepathically, and is the source of all subsequent guilt, as well as of various ceremonial purges of guilt, such as the totem feast and the holy communion.<sup>58</sup>

Expressed in this way, Freud's account reduces to a tautology, since the explanation of guilt is simply that the primal brothers felt guilty, while what we wanted to discover was the source of this guilt. We might reply with a comment Hegel made in 'Force and the Understanding': "It is an explanation that not only explains nothing, but is so plain that, while it pretends to say something different from what has already been said, really says nothing at all but the same thing".<sup>59</sup>

58. Freud, Totem and Taboo, Routledge 1919, esp. p.234ff.

59. Phenomenology, p.95.



Freud's explanation however, does go further than this, and explains guilt as a result of the "ambivalence of the emotions". This does not transcend the attitude of Understanding, but does come close to it, since it effectively introduces the notion of what Hegel calls the "second supersensible world". The implication of 'ambivalence', that is, is that within the unconscious every emotion implies equally its opposite, life implying death, love implying hate, and so on. It requires only one further step to transcend the attitude of Understanding altogether, and to intuit guilt not merely as a result of ambivalence, but as the result of the knowledge of a living entity, ethical substance itself. This, of course, is Hegel's position.<sup>60</sup>

In order for the active natural consciousness to gain the full experience of tragedy, three further moments are necessary. Aristotle distinguishes them as Peripaty, Discovery, and Pathos,<sup>61</sup> and Hegel follows this distinction.<sup>62</sup>

In the first place, Hegel argues, it requires a natural or contingent

60. Freud is not unequivocal on this matter. Sometimes he seems to regard the unconscious as hypothetical, something which we accept on the basis of its explanatory powers only. Sometimes, however, he seems rather to regard it as an implicit part of consciousness, as something which may be brought to knowledge by a process rather like Platonic recollection, so that a successful analysis should end with a phrase such as 'I have known this all along'. Nevertheless, in his writings on religion Freud consistently argues that religious phenomena can be explained in terms of the psychological needs of the individual, and to this extent his view is the direct reverse of Hegel's, in which guilt as an acknowledgement of ethical substance has the ultimate significance of being a revelation of divine Being, a being which is as we have seen beyond the explanatory powers of the Understanding.

61. Aristotle, Poetics, 1452a-6.

62. Though he does not actually use the first two of these terms.

event to throw the human and divine principles into opposition, to change suddenly the character's fortune. The ethical characters, after all, are not merely rational entities, but also natural living beings. Aristotle cites as an example of such a chance event or 'peripaty' the fact that the Messenger in *Oedipus Rex*, who intends to bring good news, accidentally reveals the secret of Oedipus' birth.<sup>63</sup> Hegel refers instead, obliquely but unmistakably, to the Antigone, where it is the natural contingency of birth which puts Eteocles and Polynices in conflict with each other, each having an equal right in divine law to the succession of the throne in Thebes.

"But that [the youth] still belongs to Nature from which he wrenched himself is evidenced by the fact that he emerges in the contingent form of two brothers, each of whom with equal right takes possession of the community". (Phenomenology, p.205)

This contingency ultimately leads Eteocles and Polynices to a gross offence against the divine law by killing one another in battle, which event sets the scene for the Antigone.

This event brings the human and divine principles into opposition in the tragic form of a conflict between two ethical characters, Antigone and Creon, in the following way. Polynices has offended the human law, since he has taken up arms with Argos against his native Thebes in an attempt to win the throne from Eteocles permanently. Creon therefore decrees that since he is a traitor, he is not entitled to burial rites. However, in the eyes of the divine law all are equal in death, and it is purely arbitrary to hold that the brother who happened to hold power

63. Ibid., and Oedipus Rex, l. 924 ff.

in Thebes should be accorded a ceremonial burial which is to be denied to the other. For Antigone, therefore, who follows the divine law, it is quite clear that Polynices must be accorded the same burial rites as his brother Eteocles, in spite of Creon's ban.

Both parties, it may be stressed, are morally right from their own point of view. Modern interpretations of Antigone, such as Brecht's or Anouilh's,<sup>64</sup> which make Antigone into a white heroine and Creon into a black dictator miss out an indispensable condition of comedy as well as tragedy, that there be a conflict not of right and wrong, but of right and right.

"Creon is not a tyrant, but really a moral power; Creon is not in the wrong; he maintains that the law of the State, the authority of government, is to be held in respect, and that punishment follows the infraction of law". (from the lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, in Paolucci and Paolucci, op.cit. p.325).

Neither, incidentally, is it the case that for Hegel "the struggle between Antigone and Creon is meant to foreshadow all the subsequent wars between religion and politics".<sup>65</sup> The conflict of divine and human law is specific to Greek life, and quite distinct from the later medieval separation between church and state.

In the second place, the tragic experience requires a discovery. As Aristotle says,

"A Discovery is, as the very word implies, a change from ignorance to knowledge, and thus either to love or hate, in the personages marked for good or evil fortune". (Aristotle, Poetics, 1452a).

64. Fagles, The Three Theban Plays, Allen Lane 1982, p.22.

65. Judith Shklar, Freedom and Independence, op.cit. p.44.

In Hegel's interpretation, such a discovery can only be the discovery of the true value of the other ethical principle, since each character knows his own ethical principle, but does not know the other.<sup>66</sup>

In the Antigone, it is Antigone herself who first makes this discovery. As her punishment for administering burial rites to Polynices she is immured. This is not exactly the infliction of the death sentence which Creon originally threatened. Instead, Antigone is merely isolated from the community, and left to choose her own destiny. As Creon says:

"Wall her up in the tomb, you have your orders  
Abandon her there, alone, and let her choose -  
death or a buried life with a good roof for shelter.  
As for myself, my hands are clean. This young girl -  
dead or alive, she will be stripped of her rights,  
her strangers rights, here in the world above"  
(Antigone, ll 970-6, trans. Fagles, op.cit. p.87)

Antigone's choice, of course, is suicide.<sup>67</sup> Her suicide, however, is not merely an anticipation of her death,<sup>68</sup> but has the greater significance of being an acknowledgement of the value of human law. While earlier she had held that she was indifferent to the law of the community, in choosing suicide she admits that a life cut off from the community is worth nothing, and acknowledges thereby that the community and its law is essential to her being.

66. Phenomenology, p.283.

67. This event had a tragic echo in Hegel's own life, when his own sister, Christianne, committed suicide shortly after Hegel's death, and apparently for reasons not unconnected with it. (See Kaufmann, op.cit. p.142 and p.298). However the parallel should not be over emphasised, and Antigone's suicide should not be seen as a result only of grief for her brothers.

68. A.C. Bradley in Paolucci and Paolucci, op. cit. p.371 offers this interpretation, apparently as Hegel's view.

Finally, in order to have its full significance, this discovery must be accompanied by 'pathos', that is, by a suffering which can engender our pity.<sup>69</sup> Only in this case does the acknowledgement of the value of the other law become more than an academic discovery, and take on the significance of the revelation of the "guilt of innocence". Hegel illustrates this point with a line from Antigone

"Because we suffer we acknowledge we have erred".  
(Phenomenology, p.284). 70

If Antigone's pathos has the significance of an acknowledgement of human law by divine law, it still remains for the human law to acknowledge the divine. If this occurs, then the tragedy is complete, and the necessity which previously lay with the characters and their known laws takes on instead the character and power of blind Destiny.

"The victory of one power and its character, and the defeat of the other would thus be only the part and the incomplete work which irresistibly advances to the equilibrium of the two. Only in the downfall of both sides alike is absolute right accomplished, and the ethical substance as the negative power which engulfs both sides, that is omnipotent and righteous Destiny, steps on the scene". (Phenomenology, p.285).

This does indeed occur in the Antigone, and Creon, who first attempts to deny, and then to resist the fate of which Tiresias forewarns him,

69. In modern tragedy, by contrast, pathos is lacking - though there are exceptions to this. (cf. ETW, p. 205).

70. Antigone 1 926. Hegel is perhaps stretching the translation a little to make his point. Both Fagles and Watling render this line in conditional mood. Watling's translation reads

"If this is God's will, I shall learn my lesson  
In death, but if my enemies are wrong  
I wish them no worse punishment than mine".  
(Sophocles, The Theban Plays, Penguin 1947, p.150)

Antigone, in other words, does not fully acknowledge her guilt in life, but declares that only in death will she find the answer. However, if we take it that the essential point of pathos is not so much that Antigone herself should suffer, but that the audience should experience her suffering as both deserved and equally at the same time undeserved, that is, as pathetic, then Hegel's interpretation stands. "Never has innocence suffered", Hegel wrote at Berne, "every suffering is guilt". (ETW, p.233).

finally acknowledges his own guilt too.<sup>71</sup>

With the appearance of Destiny, the movement of tragedy is complete. However, even in Destiny the subjective element of particular individuality which according to Hegel is absent from immediate *Sittlichkeit*, is not experienced directly. Indeed, it is precisely this fact which distinguishes the ancient notion of necessity as Destiny from the modern view often associated with Boethius of necessity as consolation. In the ancient view, the individual simply accepts his fate, and though destiny may appear as an alien power, the individual who accepts it does not feel any sense of bondage to it, since he has not yet opposed himself as a particular individual to objective necessity. "Personal subjectivity" Hegel argues "has not yet acquired its infinite significance",<sup>72</sup> and an individual who does not take himself subjectively to be free has no difficulty in accepting fate, and no need for consolation. In the Christian worlds, by contrast, the opposite is true.

"Christianity, we know, teaches that God wishes all men to be saved. That teaching declares that subjectivity has an infinite value. And that consoling power of Christianity just lies in that God himself in it is known as the absolute subjectivity, so that inasmuch as subjectivity involves the element of particularity *our* particular personality too is recognised not merely as something to be solely and simply nullified, but as at the same time something to be preserved". (Lesser Logic, p.210, §147).

71. Antigone, l. 1321. Cf. Paolucci and Paolucci, op. cit., p. 73 f and p. 186 for further remarks by Hegel on Creon's pathos. Aristotle argues that Sophocles' portrayal of Creon as having "full knowledge on the point of doing the deed" is bad poetry because it diminishes the element of pathos. (Poetics, 1454 a)

72. Lesser Logic, p. 210, §147.



The Destiny which Hegel describes in the Phenomenology lies in point of fact midway between the two conceptions of necessity which he outlines in the lesser Logic. From the subjective point of view, Destiny does indeed refer the individual away from human and divine law and back to himself. However, objectively speaking the fact remains that the human and divine law still exist, and that ethical action can only exist through the mediation of these forms of law. This tension between an emergent "principle of self-sufficient individuality"<sup>73</sup> which is perhaps not known, but at least felt<sup>74</sup> in some way, and an objective *Sittlichkeit* which cannot accommodate this principle, is responsible for the whole decay of Greek ethical life. It is illustrated dramatically in the condemnation of Socrates, who personifies the principle of subjectivity which will cause the collapse of Greek life, on the one hand, but the necessary development of free individuality on the other.

"The sentence bears on the one hand the aspect of unimpeachable rectitude - in as much as the Athenian people condemns its deadliest foe - but on the other hand, that of a deeply tragical character, inasmuch as the Athenians had to make the discovery that what they reprobated in Socrates had already struck firm root amongst themselves, and that they must be pronounced guilty or innocent with him." (Philosophy of History, p.269).

The objective form of *Sittlichkeit* which can accommodate the principle of subjectivity is, as we have seen, the type of positive law which emerges in the Roman world, which (a) respects the individual universally and irrespective of his particular characteristics or actions, simply as a 'person', and (b) makes a distinction between public and private life,

73. Philosophy of Right, p.124.

74. For example, in Socrates' "divine sign" (Philosophy of Right, p.184).

and allows the individual subjectively to realise his moral freedom in the latter sphere. It remains to be seen how this form can be grasped as a necessary result of the experience of ethical action.

Hegel identifies within the ethical world of human and divine law a principle of corruption. The source of corruption is not so much the private interest of particular individuals, but the interests of the family and of its private property. Creon repeatedly and hopelessly complains of these corrupting forces in Antigone,<sup>75</sup> and the political thought of both Plato and Aristotle may be seen as in large part a response to them. The corrupting impulse comes not from any individual greed, but specifically from woman.

"Womankind - the everlasting irony [in the life] of the community - changes by intrigue the universal end of the government into the work of some particular individual, and perverts the property of the state into a possession and ornament for the Family".  
(Phenomenology, p.288).

This corruption may at first seem to be something which the community can contain by using its power to suppress it, just as it can contain and suppress criminal behaviour in general. However, Hegel argues that the principle of individuality which is manifested in corruption is a principle which the state itself requires this same principle, and its power is based upon it. Just as the family needs and expects its brave young men to further and protect its interests, so the state too gains its power only through its brave guardians.

75. Antigone, ll. 181, 222, 293, 677, and 1055, for example

"The brave youth in whom woman finds her pleasure, the suppressed principle of corruption, now has his day and his worth is openly acknowledged". (Phenomenology, p.289).

Both the family and the community therefore turn out to depend upon the same source of power. In repressing corruption, the community represses itself. It becomes a matter of luck which side will win; but this contingency is equally from another point of view the necessity of the decay of the ethical world.

"Because the existence of ethical life rests on strength and luck, the *decision is already made* that its downfall has come". (Phenomenology, p. 289)

In the Philosophy of History, Hegel identifies Alexander as the "brave youth" who brings about the actual downfall of the ethical life.<sup>76</sup> In the Phenomenology Hegel describes the downfall of ethical life only from the formal point of view of the experience of Spirit which may be said to result from it.

"Just as previously the Penates succumbed to the national Spirit, so now the living Spirits of the nation succumb through their own individuality and perish in a *universal* community, whose simple universality is soulless and dead, and is alive only in the *single* individual *qua* single. The ethical shape of Spirit has vanished and another takes its place". (Phenomenology, p. 289).

76. Philosophy of History, pp. 272-4. Hegel goes so far as to make Alexander's youthfulness a necessity. "Alexander had the good fortune to die at the proper time; i.e. it may be called good fortune, but it is rather a necessity. That he may stand before the eyes of posterity as a youth, an early death must hurry him away". (ibid).

In other words, precisely in so far as the principle of subjective individuality succeeds in establishing itself in an objective form, so the distinction between human and divine law disappears, and is replaced instead by the unconditionally universal law of the Roman world, which includes both human and divine principles, and yet leaves room for the individual to act ethically independently of those principles, and

"the simple compactness of their individuality [i.e. of the ethical characters] has been shattered into a multitude of separate atoms". (Phenomenology, p. 289).

(c) *Der Rechtszustand*

From the subjective point of view, *Rechtszustand* is the legal status which in Roman law is given equally to every citizen, and expressed in the phrase '*civis Romanus sum*'. Here

"What counts as absolute essential being is the sheer empty unit of the person". (Phenomenology, p.291)

This status is given by the new form of universal law which has emerged from the collapse of the *polis*, and from this point of view *Rechtszustand* is better translated as the state of law, and understood as the opposite of *Naturzustand*, the state of nature.<sup>77</sup>

Hegel has very little to say in favour of this final moment of *Sittlichkeit*.

The individual counts only as a person, and

"to describe an individual as a 'person' <sup>78</sup> is an expression of contempt". (Phenomenology, p.292)

All are equal as persons, and in this sense *Rechtszustand* signifies the end of the division of society into two separate classes, masters and slaves. This, however, signifies not so much the end of slavery, as the end of mastery, the "loss of freedom",<sup>79</sup> and the establishment of a

77. Werke, Berlin 1845, p.329.

78. Hegel is perhaps thinking of the french expressions '*type*' and '*espèce*', which reduce an individual to a manifestation of a species. Cf. Phenomenology, p.298 where Hegel quotes from Diderot's Rameau's Nephew, (Penguin 1966, p.108).

79. Natural Law, p.101.

"universal private life, and the situation in which the nation consists solely in a second class".<sup>80</sup> In Natural Law Hegel quotes Gibbon to show the decay which gradually results from the reduction of individuality to personality.

"This long peace, and the uniform government of the Romans, introduced a slow and secret poison into the vitals of the empire. The minds of men were gradually reduced to the same level, the fire of genius was extinguished, and even the military spirit evaporated... The most aspiring spirits resorted to the standards of emperors; and the deserted provinces, deprived of political strength or union, insensibly sunk into the languid indifference of private life". (Natural Law, p.101f).

Destiny, in the ethical world, was the negative power of the ethical substance. In the Roman world, this negative power is intuited again as also essentially subjective, and

"that very necessity of blank Destiny, is nothing else but the 'I' of self consciousness". (Phenomenology, p. 290).

This gives rise to a new and modern conception of Destiny, which Napoleon once expressed in a conversation with Goethe by saying that "*La politique est la fatalité*".<sup>81</sup> This is in Hegel's view the conception which governs the Roman world, a conception which has none of the ethical value of the Greek principle of destiny, and yet none of the freedom of the modern world.

"The distinction between the Roman and Persian principles is exactly this - that the former stifles all vitality, while the latter allowed of its existence in the fullest measure. Through its being the aim of the State, that the social units in their moral life should be sacrificed to it, the world is sunk in melancholy: its heart is broken, and it is all over with the Natural side of Spirit, which has sunk into a feeling of unhappiness". (Philosophy of History, p.278).

80. Ibid, p.102.

81 Philosophy of History, p.278. ("politics is fate").



In the Phenomenology Hegel traces the development of this unhappiness through the notions of Stoicism and Scepticism to Unhappy Consciousness. The Unhappy Consciousness in the Roman world - which has much in common with the Hobbesian world - regards the emperor as the principle of unity of the otherwise disconnected subjects of the polity, as the essential "lord and master" (who takes himself to be "an actual living god") and himself as inessential and slavish. The collapse of the happy and beautiful life of the Greeks is in this sense a return to the unhappiness of the Judaic view, which regards the whole world and even God himself as entirely alien.<sup>82</sup> There is no pathos in this harsh world.

"The great tragedy of the Jewish people is no Greek tragedy; it can arouse neither terror nor pity, for both of these arise only out of the fate which follows from the inevitable slip of a beautiful character; it can arouse horror alone. The fate of the Jewish people is the fate of Macbeth who stepped out of Nature itself, clung to alien beings, and so in their service had to trample and slay everything holy in human nature, had at last to be forsaken by his gods (since they were objects and he their slave) and he dashed to pieces on his faith itself". (Phenomenology, p.205).

The Roman world, however, wretched though it may be, differs from the Jewish world in that the former contains the seeds of reconciliation. The misery of the Roman world is not the misery of a self which does not know its essence, but of a self which has lost its essence, and

"only from this feeling could arise the supersensuous, the free Spirit in Christianity" (Philosophy of History, p.278)

The experience of Greek tragedy, the loss by the self of its essence, therefore, effects a transition from the Jewish world to the Roman world.

82. Phenomenology, p. 293f

The Roman world is a continuation of the Jewish Spirit but with the addition of an implicit principle of subjectivity, and the two worlds therefore relate to each other exactly as the Old Testament relates to the New.

In the Phenomenology, Hegel expresses this by saying that the alienation which is experienced in the Roman world is capable of being intuited as externalisation of the self. In this intuition we leave the world of *Sittlichkeit* altogether and move to the world of Culture. In *Sittlichkeit* as a whole, the ethical essence was still immediate, and did not find expression as a knowable object. In the Greek world it exists only as custom, and in the Roman world the "universally acknowledged authority" is intuited not as the authority of the self, but as an alien authority. Culture however, in the Christian world, is capable of bringing these subjective and objective moments together and of intuiting objective authority as an externalisation of the ethical essence of the self.

"...this activity and process whereby substance becomes actual is the alienation of the personality, for the self that has an absolute significance in its immediate existence, i.e. without having alienated itself from itself is without substance, and is the plaything of these raging elements. Its substance therefore is its externalisation [*Entausserung*] and the externalisation is the substance, i.e. the spiritual powers ordering themselves into a world and thereby preserving themselves". (Phenomenology, p. 295).

Before going on, I want to make a digression from the text of the Phenomenology to look further at the connection between Greek tragedy and the political theory of Plato's Republic.

- (d) The ancient and modern views of corruption: Plato's Republic as a response to the tragedy of Greek ethical life.

Hegel's view of the corruption and downfall of *Sittlichkeit* may be taken as a criticism of the romantic idealisation of ancient Greece and republican Rome. Hegel's interpretation has two implications which contradict the romantic view, one general and one more specific. At a general level, he has made it apparent that the harmonious aspect of immediate *Sittlichkeit* which was admired by the romantics also has a negative aspect, which is expressed by the fact that action reveals a discord<sup>83</sup> in the form of tragic destiny. This destiny is not only undesirable, but also both unavoidable and a cause of the necessary collapse of the ancient ethical order, which henceforth cannot be retrieved. At a more specific level, Hegel's interpretation implies that ancient political theory, which is widely taken to be an attempt to describe a perfect political order, is likely at least in part to be a reaction to specific difficulties which appear only in the ancient world. Any attempt to evaluate ancient political thought in the modern world should therefore account for this. It is this

83. It may perhaps be worth noticing that in Greek music, which is modal, 'harmony' has the meaning of concord only, and there is no harmonic movement; whereas in modern music, which is diatonic, harmony is not static but must involve a movement from discord to concord, so that both discord and concord are essential to harmony. In music, as in Spirit, we may say that harmony for the Greeks is immediate, while in the modern world it is mediated. This may seem to be an arcane connection, but there are nevertheless many ways in which music exhibits structures of Spirit, and Hegel's view that art is essentially a representation of the divine may also, as many musicians know intuitively, hold good for music.

second implication I want to develop here, especially in connection with Plato's Republic.

In the Philosophy of Right, Hegel comments that

"Plato's Republic, which passes proverbially as an empty ideal, is, in essence, nothing but an interpretation of Greek ethical life". (Philosophy of Right, p.10. Preface).

However, although Hegel makes similar remarks elsewhere,<sup>84</sup> he nowhere develops this interpretation of the Republic in any detail. Even in the History of Philosophy, his comments on the Republic do not go much beyond the general assertion that the principle of subjective freedom is absent or suppressed.<sup>85</sup> This assertion does indeed express Hegel's criticism of Plato at every level, from the most general level, that is, the theory of form, down to the most specific details of the Republic. We should not imagine that we will be able to distinguish acceptable from unacceptable aspects of Plato. Hegel's criticism is directed at his entire thought, not at parts of it only. Nevertheless, the absence of subjective freedom in general may be seen to condition Plato's most specific proposals in a very particular way, which has not often been understood.

The most specific proposals of the Republic are concerned with the abolition of the family and private property for the guardian class. Modern commentators tend quite generally to assume that Plato arrives at these proposals as a result of a process of pure reason which has no connection with any particular details or difficulties experienced in Greek life. Barker, for

84. e.g. Philosophy of Right, p. 124. §18g; Paolucci and Paolucci, op.cit. p.190; Philosophy of History, p. 267f (where Hegel describes Aristotle's approach to the study of constitutions not as we might expect, as a response to corruption, but as itself a symptom of corruption, "the principle of decay").

85. History of Philosophy, Vol.2, p.90ff, esp. pp. 104-115.

example, attributes to Plato a "theory of communism"<sup>86</sup> and sets out to discover whether this theory is indeed a "logical deduction from his own premises".<sup>87</sup> He summarises Plato's view as follows:

"Not only is communism a necessary condition of the rule of reason, but reason issues in communism". (Barker, op. cit. p. 243).

Similarly, he regards the purpose of Plato's proposal to abolish the family as "the emancipation of women".<sup>88</sup> In both cases, it is assumed that Plato's ideas are indeed no more than "empty ideals", and the possibility that they involve not only reason, but also an "interpretation of Greek ethical life" is not even considered. The Republic, as Skinner would argue,<sup>89</sup> is treated as an eternal or sacred text, and it is therefore assumed that its universal reasoning will not be tainted by any impure temporal concerns. We will see, by contrast, that Plato's reasoning is not at all abstract, but is closely related to specific difficulties, and that it is greater philosophy because of this.

We may demonstrate this by considering the meaning of the idea of corruption in the ancient world, and contrast it to the modern notion of corruption. A good deal of ancient political theory, perhaps even all of it, may be regarded as in some sense a response to the problem of political corruption. Aristotle's Politics, in particular illustrates this, if we take his distinction between good and deviant states to be equally a

86. E.Barker, Greek Political Theory, Methuen 1960, p.250.

87. Ibid.

88. Ibid, p.255.

89. See Note 1 to Ch. 1 above.

distinction between honourable and corrupt states; and the same theme may be discerned elsewhere, for example in Xenophon's *Hiero* and *Cyropaedia*.

In the ancient view, all intrusion of private interest is regarded as corrupt. As Aristotle put it

"It is clear then that those constitutions which aim at the common good are *right*, as being in accord with absolute justice; while those which aim only at the good of the rulers are *wrong*". (Aristotle, Politics, op. cit. p.115).

If corruption is defined in these sweeping terms, it is also defined as a threat to the very existence of a political community.

"For the real difference between man and other animals is that humans alone have a perception of good and evil, right and wrong, just and unjust. And it is the sharing of a common view in these matters that makes a household or a city" (Ibid, p.29).

The predominance of a particular view of what is good over others, by implication, is the destruction of the ethical community, and the reduction of the *polis* to a mere aggregation of individuals.

The particular source of the principle of corruption is identified in varying ways. Sometimes it is located simply in desire, especially in the desire for wealth and in sexual desire. Sometimes it is located more specifically in the desire of the family and in the influence of women within the family upon men within the community. In one passage in the Republic, for example, Plato identifies the influence of women on young men as a source of the corruption of the timocratic character, in a way which is strongly reminiscent of Hegel's characterisation of corruption.



"He may be the son of an excellent father who, living in an ill-governed state, holds aloof from public life because he would sooner forego some of his rights than take part in the scramble for office or be troubled with going to law. His son's character begins to take shape when he hears his mother complaining that she is slighted by the other woman because her husband has no official post. She sees too that he cares little for money, and is indifferent to all the scurrilous battle of words that goes on in the law courts; she finds him always absorbed in his thoughts, without much regard for her, or disregard either. Nursing all these grievances, she tells her son that his father is not much of a man and far too easy-going, and has all the other weaknesses that the wives of such men are fond of harping on". (Plato, Republic, 549d; Cornford op. cit. p.266).

In Hegel's view, as we have seen, the corruption of the ancient world is founded specifically in the conflict between human and divine law. Plato does not go so far as to acknowledge this. He apparently accepts the two principles of law as given, as substantial existences which are independently real, beyond rational doubt, and which he therefore has no right to question. Nevertheless, if we go beyond Plato's explicit comments on corruption, and ask instead what kinds of difficulties might be resolved by the kind of specific proposals Plato makes, then we may confirm that in nearly every case the adoption of these proposals would have the effect of preventing the conflict of human and divine law, and particularly of the influence of the divine law in the affairs of the state.

We may consider for example, the proposals to include women in the guardian class and to abolish family relationships. The first of these is introduced with a semblance of a rational argument, which says that since the differences between men and women appear to be accidental, not essential, there appears to be no reason for excluding them from citizenship. We may doubt however, whether Plato takes this reasoning seriously. He does not hold to the view in general that because all people are rational there should be no distinctions at all within the state, and on the contrary

his state displays rigid class distinctions. If women are to be excluded from being a particular class, it cannot be because Plato opposes class in general. Similarly, though there is a feeling that women may gain status through citizenship, there does not seem to be any indication that they gain freedom, or that freedom in any concrete sense is something which might be valued by a guardian, and it seems implausible that Plato is concerned to 'emancipate' women.

In the second proposal, to abolish familial relationships - or rather, to broaden them to the point where they have no value as particular ties, which as Aristotle rightly points out means that they have no value at all <sup>90</sup> - Plato's purpose becomes clearer. It is the influence of the family tie which will lead the guardians to neglect the interests of the state in favour of the interests of their beloved. This means in particular that they will be liable to lose the cardinal virtue of the guardian class, that is, courage. If on the other hand they can be made to direct the love they would normally feel for particular individuals towards the community as a whole, then their courage will be guaranteed, since the desire to stay alive for the benefit of particular individuals within the community will be replaced by the desire to protect the community from others at all costs. Plato reinforces this inversion by

90. Aristotle, Politics, p.60f. One of Aristotle's complaints against Plato is that his proposals concerning the organisation of marriage or mating ceremonies does not guard sufficiently against the possibility of certain types of incest, i.e. against the possibility of offending divine law.

suggesting that courage in battle should be rewarded by sexual favours,<sup>91</sup> inverting the actual pressure to the contrary, which Aristophanes portrayed in Lysistrata, where the women of Athens refuse sexual favours until their men agree to give up their current campaign, for no other reason than that they would rather their spouses were at home than away risking their lives and their family's livelihoods in war.<sup>92</sup>

Similarly, if we consider Plato's proposal that the guardians should have no private property, we find something quite different from a "logical deduction from his own premises". This proposal is in fact made along with several other proposals, which concern the manner in which the guardians will live. Again, the most evident factor involved in general is not the absence of private property, but the absence of any family ties. Plato proposes

"First, none of them must possess any private property beyond the barest essentials. Next, no one is to have any dwelling or stone-house that is not open for all to enter at will. Their food, in the quantities required by men of temperance and courage who are in training for war, they will receive from the other citizens as the wages of their guardianship, fixed so that there shall be just enough for the year with nothing over; and they will have meals in common and all live together like soldiers in a camp" (Republic, 416 d; Cornford, op. cit., p.106)

91. Plato, Republic, 468 b. Plato also in the same passage explicitly prohibits Creon's offense of divine law: "So we will have no stripping of the slain and we shall not prevent their comrades from burying them". (469 e).
92. Lysistrata, we may note, is in this sense no more pacifist than Antigone: both sides are right from their own point of view, and the position of the women is essentially a defense of the interests of the family, rather than a moral condemnation of war.

As a reason for this, Plato gives the following:

"If they should come to possess land of their own and houses and money, they will give up their guardianship for the management of their farms and households and become tyrants at enmity with their fellow citizens instead of allies". (ibid).

We should not, therefore, regard this as a theory of communion. It is a theory, if anything, of a military life, and is valuable in a situation where any influence of the interests of the family in politics is a threat to the very existence of the political community.

In the modern world, by contrast, the notion of corruption has a quite different significance, which we may observe, for example, in Machiavelli. It is still defined in terms of the interests of the individual and the state, but the individual has a different significance, since in addition to the implicit recognition of his individuality in the family, he has also an explicit recognition of individuality in the sphere of civil society, which was absent from Greek ethical life, and in the natural or moral law which governs it. This affects the notion of corruption in a number of ways.

Firstly, corruption in the modern world is a problem which the state can contain. Private interest as such is not corrupt, and on the contrary, politics is moved by the private interests of the members of the polity: private and public interests advance hand in hand - though not without the occasional disagreement. Corruption is the attitude which places the aims of the individual above the aims of community. Thus, in The Prince, for example, Machiavelli distinguishes those who come to power by prowess and fortune (*virtu* and *fortuna*) from those who come to power by criminal or nefarious means. The former are certainly self-interested, and may, like Cesario Borgia, be quite ruthless, but they are motivated

by *gloria*, a desire for fame, and this ensures that their actions are done for the sake of public above private interests.<sup>93</sup> The latter do not desire fame, but only power, and their actions are, like those of Agathocles of Syracuse, dishonourable and corrupt.<sup>94</sup>

The judgement of an action as corrupt, then, lies outside the sphere of the political itself. To be corrupt is not to offend a civil law - especially not in the case of sovereign princes who are in a certain sense above civil law - but to be judged abhorrent in virtue of some moral or natural law. A corrupt action may indeed offend civil law - Richard Nixon and Jeremy Thorpe both did this - but it does not have to, and in so far as it does, the state should have no more difficulty in containing it that it does with any other criminal behaviour. Essentially, however, corruption belongs to the realm of moral law and lies outside the jurisdiction of civil law. The state both should not and need not trouble itself with it. What is Caesar's should be given to Caesar, and what is God's given to God.<sup>95</sup>

Corruption understood as the predominance of private over public interests, then, is a peripheral concern for modern political thought, while it was absolutely central for the ancients. On the other hand, especially during this century, we have experienced a different form of corruption of the political, which may be defined as the extension of the sphere of jurisdiction of civil law into spheres which belong rightly to moral law, i.e. totalitarianism. This has led to a charged re-evaluation of classical thought about corruption, which treats it as though the principle of

93. Machiavelli, The Prince, Bks. VI and VII, Penguin 1961, pp.49-61.

94. Ibid, Bk. VIII, pp 61-66.

95. Cf. ETW, p. 281ff.

corruption were the same in both the ancient and modern worlds. The attitude to classical thought may be either positive or negative. Leo Strauss, to cite an example of the first, argues that though the tyranny of the modern world is distinct from ancient tyranny, it nevertheless "cannot be understood adequately except within the classical framework".<sup>96</sup> On the other hand, many commentators have chosen to criticise Plato sharply on the grounds that his proposals to extend the jurisdiction of the state into areas where we feel it does not belong, such as education, family life, censorship of literature, and so on, sounds suspiciously like modern totalitarianism, and should not be tolerated.<sup>97</sup> Hegel himself has been tarred with the same brush.<sup>98</sup>

We may agree that Plato's proposals would be 'totalitarian' if they were to be put into political practice in the modern context. However, we must deny that they are totalitarian in spirit, for a number of reasons. To begin with, we may observe that in modern totalitarianism is in general aware that it demands the sacrifice of individual freedoms and justifies this in some way, as the means to some end, or as valuable for its own sake.<sup>99</sup> The same cannot be said of Plato's proposals. The freedom of the individual does not appear to be something that Plato and his contemporaries valued; and although Plato responds to the possible objection that the

96. Leo Strauss, *op.cit.* p.190.

97. R.H.S. Crossman, Plato Today; K.Popper, The Open Society and its Enemies, Vol.1 Routledge 1966 e.g. p.5 and p.86 ff.

98. Popper, *op.cit.* Vol. 2, e.g. p.31.

99. As, for example, in the attitudes of "virtue". See Phenomenology p.288 and Ch. 6 above.



guardians may be unhappy because of the austerity of their life, he does<sup>100</sup> not even raise the question of whether their subjective freedom may be limited, for example by their being unable to choose their social class.<sup>101</sup>

More concretely, we may say that if the 'totalitarian' proposals of the Republic are designed to avoid the tragic conflict of human and divine law, they have a purpose which is both more noble than modern totalitarianism, and relevant only in the situation where such a conflict is likely. Modern commentators often fail to understand the Republic in this specific context, and therefore assume that Plato's proposals are arrived at through the same kind of reasoning which more modern thinkers use to arrive at similar proposals. In particular, Plato is often interpreted as upholding the idea of the rule of reason, in the same way as Rousseau or Marx may be said to do. The family and private property should be abolished because they are particular things, and according to the notion of reason, only the universal should rule. Plato, however, is far from upholding this rationalist view (which was criticised in Chapter 6 above) and holds that not reason, but justice should rule, or, to say the same thing differently, that not bureaucrats, but philosopher kings, individual political men who are acquainted with the form of justice should be at the head of the ideal state. If the proposals to abolish family and private property are understood as particular proposals to avoid (*per impossibile*) the power of destiny, then there is no need to account for them as a rationalist deviation from the true Spirit of Plato's philosophy.

100. Republic, 419a-421c.

101. Philosophy of Right, p. 133 and p. 195.

This does not, of course, mean that Plato's proposals are acceptable, even in his own day. They do indeed attack subjective freedom, not just accidentally, but quite centrally.

"According to the conception of subjective freedom, however, the family is just as necessary, yea, sacred to the individual as is property". (History of Philosophy, Vol.2, p.112)

There can be no justification for suppressing something which is an essential moment of Spirit, and though we may plead mitigating circumstances on Plato's behalf, we cannot expect him to be acquitted. However, if we were to find a thinker who made proposals similar to Plato's - perhaps derived from them - in a situation in which subjective freedom is known to exist, and as a response not to a particular difficulty, but simply to an abstract idea, then we would have to say that these proposals would become very much more objectionable than anything we find in Plato. Such thinking, in Hegel's view, is characteristic of the Enlightenment in general, and may be found in Rousseau's political theory in particular; and the following section of the Phenomenology, on Culture, is intended in good part as a criticism of such thinking. Having explained carefully in *Sittlichkeit* why Plato's ideas may not be applied in any direct way to the modern world, Hegel goes on to explain carefully what happens if anyone should be so foolish as to try.

## CHAPTER EIGHT: CONSCIENCE

There are, in Hegel's account, three forms of the spiritual self, and three corresponding spiritual worlds. They are the abstract self or 'person' of *Rechtzustand*; the self of Culture which has externalised itself and has itself for an object; and the self of Morality, which lets the objective self of culture go free and thereby gain a living positive content.<sup>1</sup> The knowledge of good and evil which emerges from the tragic experience of *Sittlichkeit*, then, appears firstly as abstract positive law, secondly as the objective structures of the state, custom, and belief, in a word, the Culture of the community, and thirdly as the individual's notions of duty and conscience in Morality.

I do not intend to examine the last two forms of the spiritual self in any detail here. The main thrust of my argument has been concerned with the structure and spirit of the Phenomenology, and while there is certainly more to be said on these points, some of which could be said in connection with Culture and Morality, I do not feel that the returns would justify my inflicting upon the reader an exegesis of the long and complex movement of Culture, or the details of the chapter on Morality. The final movement of 'Morality', however, titled 'Conscience', has a special structural significance, and I want to conclude with a brief discussion of this section.

We have already seen that the idea of conscience is especially important to Hegel<sup>2</sup>, even in his earliest writings.

1. Phenomenology, p. 384

2. Chapter I above, esp. pp 19-24 .

In the Phenomenology, however, it has an additional significance, for as well as being an important idea in its own right, it also has the significance of completing the development of subjective and objective spirit, and preparing consciousness for the atonement<sup>3</sup> of all its previous shapes in the form of religion. In quite a strong sense, therefore, the discussion of Conscience is the end of the Phenomenology.

To say this is not to belittle the significance of religion. It has already been argued both that Hegel's entire thought must be understood in terms of its religious aims, and that Hegel's view of religion may be differentiated from Plato's in that Hegel makes religion an independent object of knowledge, while Plato makes it an object of faith which may be reached only through phenomenal knowledge of non-religious things, not known in its own right. However, although religion for Hegel may be known as a phenomenon and in this sense has its place in a phenomenology, nevertheless this knowledge is no longer simple consciousness, but specifically *self*-consciousness of Spirit.<sup>4</sup> Since phenomenology is defined by the attitude of consciousness, it follows that religion is beyond the bounds of phenomenology in its strict sense. Specifically, while in each of the moments of the Phenomenology prior to religion we are dealing with a specific aspect of Spirit which has been isolated by the analytical activity of consciousness, in Religion we find for the first time the whole of Spirit presented as a single living entity.<sup>5</sup> Whatever the significance of this may be, I have elected to restrict

3. "Atonement", of course, is the same as the movement which is described by Lukács and others as "totalization". The term "atonement", however, has the advantage of avoiding the arithmetical implications of "totalization" and of suggesting instead a becoming at-one; and the disadvantage, for those who prefer the idea of "totalization", of having an historical currency with religious connotations. Hegel's notion of "reconciliation" (*Versöhnung*) carries a similar meaning.

4. Phenomenology, p. 411f; Hyppolite op. cit. p. 535ff.

5. Phenomenology, p. 414

my study to Hegel's analysis of the twelve parts of Spirit, and this analysis ends with Conscience.

In order to understand the significance of Conscience, it will help to recall Hegel's views on the Kantian interpretation of the relationship of morality to religion. These views are set out especially in Faith and Knowledge.

In Religion with the Limits of Reason alone, Kant had regarded God as a "postulate" of reason, that is, as "a demand of reason which need not be met".<sup>6</sup> Moral reason may well imply or even require the existence of a divine being who commands that which moral reason concludes, but it does not follow from this need of reason that such a being does in fact exist. Since divine being therefore cannot be known to exist by reason, it follows that "knowledge" of such a being must be relegated (or exalted, depending upon one's viewpoint) to the level of faith. God, in other words, is noumenal. Faith becomes an adjunct to morality, which will certainly be adopted by the most noble and enlightened minds, but is in no sense necessary to morality.

"Hence, for its own sake, morality does not need religion at all (whether objectively, as regards willing, or subjectively, as regards ability); by virtue of pure practical reason alone it is self-sufficient". (Kant, Religion within the Limits of Reason alone trans. Greene and Hudson, Harper Torchbooks, New York 1960, cited hereafter as Religion, p.3).

Morality, on the other hand, both points towards and is enriched by religion.

"If morality finds in the holiness of its law an object of the greatest respect, then at the level of religion it presents the ultimate cause, which consummates those laws, as an object of *adoration* and thus appears in its majesty". (ibid, p.7)

6. Lauer, Hegel's Concept of God, State University of New York Press 1982, p. 24.

Further, there can be two approaches to religion, namely, Biblical theology and philosophical theology. These belong to strictly defined faculties at the University, and presumably likewise to separate mental faculties, to wit, faith and knowledge, each having its own legitimate sphere of activity.<sup>7</sup>

Kant's own text, is, of course, mainly what he would call philosophical theology. It deals rationally with the notion of original sin, the conflict of good and evil, and the possibility of the victory of the good over the evil. However, Kant also appends to each of the four sections of his philosophical discussion a "General Observation" which goes beyond the limits of the purely rational towards a position which requires faith. Thus, for example, he concludes his discussion of 'Radical Evil in Human Nature'<sup>8</sup> with an observation that is a cornerstone of Lutheran faith, that to become morally good in the eyes not of law but of religion requires not only good action but a change of heart, which cannot be produced by reason alone and must therefore be a "work of grace". He concludes

"Hence we can admit a work of grace as something incomprehensible, but we cannot adopt it into our own maxims either for theoretical or for practical use" (Religion op.cit. p. 49)

In spite of his own protestant faith, Hegel finds this reasoning objectionable. It depends upon regarding reason as a discrete faculty of mind, while, as we saw in Chapter 6 above, Hegel's view is that reason is the certainty of being *all* reality, and that Spirit is the knowledge of this certainty.<sup>9</sup>

7. Kant, Religion op.cit. pp. 7-10.

8. Which evil, in Kant's interpretation, has its origin not in human nature but in the will, and consists "in maxims of the will which are contrary to the moral law" (Religion, op.cit. p.27)

9. Thus, in Faith and Knowledge p.102 Hegel argues that "Kant's view that faith is non-cognitive is grounded only in his misjudgement of the rational as such ...".



In Faith and Knowledge, therefore, he criticises Kant especially for his view that beauty is quite distinct from reason,<sup>10</sup> and for the view that reason is opposed to nature.<sup>11</sup> On the latter point, in connection with Kant's "doctrine of faith in God", Hegel has the following to say:

"Kant, to be sure, recasts this speculative idea [of the identity of thought and being] into the humane form: morality and happiness harmonise. This harmony is made into a thought in its turn, and the realisation of this thought is called the highest good in the world - something as wretched as this morality and this happiness the highest good ... If Reason were to arrive at the intuition and knowledge that Reason and nature are in absolute harmony and are in themselves blissful, it would recognise its wretched morality which does not harmonise with happiness and the wretched happiness which does not harmonise with morality as the nothings that they are". (Faith and Knowledge, p.95) 12

Later, in the lesser Logic, Hegel argues more plainly that since religion is an attribute of man alone, this must be in virtue of the essential nature of humanity, which is Spirit or self-conscious Reason.

"These ideas would put *feeling* and *thought* so far apart as to make them opposites, and would represent them as so antagonistic, that feeling, particularly religious feeling, is supposed to be contaminated, perverted, and even annihilated by thought. They also emphatically hold that religion and piety grow out of, and rest upon something else, and not on thought. But those who make this separation forget meanwhile that only man has the capacity for religion, and that animals no more have religion than they have law and morality". (Lesser Logic, p.4, §2).

The obvious objection to this is that if religion is to be reduced to reason, then it loses precisely the *differentia specifica* of its transcendence, and ceases to be religion at all.<sup>13</sup> If God is indeed Absolute

10. Faith and Knowledge, p. 86.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 94f.

12. Hegel is referring to Kant's Critique of Practical Reason, Bk II Ch II section V.

13. This objection has been raised specifically against Hegel by Paul Ricoeur. See Lauer, Hegel's Concept of God, op.cit. p.4.

Being, then he cannot be made to be in any way dependent upon our reason, because this would detract from his absolute character. This attitude is especially familiar to us in Scotland through the Calvinist doctrine of the "elect", which argues that since we can have no subjective reason to believe in God, if we nevertheless do, it must be because God has chosen to give us faith, or more strictly, because he has chosen to make us choose to believe.

Properly understood, however, Hegel's view does not destroy faith by replacing it with a rational knowledge, but rather alters the character of faith so that it may be reconciled with knowledge. If knowledge is achieved purely through subjective ratiocination, then it follows that an object such as God is beyond knowledge. If knowledge, on the other hand, is understood essentially as knowledge of something which really exists, and this something is conceived along the lines of the platonic theory of form, as existing reason, then knowledge itself always involves an element of faith, since its object always maintains a degree of independence from the knowing subject.<sup>14</sup> Reason itself is ultimately divine, and this means that an acknowledgement of its truth is ultimately an act of faith which is arguably more profound than the "leap in the dark" of faith in something explicitly beyond knowledge, and which yet is not opposed to our own rationality. Hegel's panlogism does not so much reduce God to the level of merely human reason, as intuitively believes in reason itself as divine.<sup>15</sup>

14. Cf. Faith and Knowledge, p. 124

15. For a further discussion of these issues, see Lauer's excellent "Hegel's Concept of God".

If this is indeed the case, and moral reason can be reconciled with religious faith, then it must be possible to discover religious faith itself within the attitude of moral reason. In Kant's view, moral reason is independent of religion: if it is possible to demonstrate that on the contrary the notion of religion is indeed essential to the attitude of morality from within the limits set by the attitude of morality itself, then it will follow that Kant's view is false, and that morality and religion can indeed be reconciled. We will be able to

"... re-establish for philosophy the Idea of absolute freedom and along with it the absolute Passion, the speculative Good Friday in place of the historic Good Friday". (Faith and Knowledge, p.191).

This is what Hegel sets out to do in the chapter of the Phenomenology on Morality

In Morality, Spirit rises for the first time to a *Weltanschauung*, a view of the world.<sup>16</sup> Its attitude may be summarised in the statement "there is a moral consciousness." The ethical attitude of Reason defined the moral as that which according to the principle of the categorical imperative is non-contradictory. However, "a contradiction must be a contradiction of something, i.e. of some content presupposed from the start as a fixed principle",<sup>17</sup> and reason alone cannot provide such a principle, and cannot therefore ground a moral judgement. The moral world view takes a step beyond this dilemma, and asserts that the moral consciousness wills duty for duty's sake - the position which, of course, was taken by Kant.

16. Hyppolite op.cit. p.469f.

17. Philosophy of Right, p.90, §135

The moral world-view, therefore, advances beyond the viewpoint only of the categorical imperative, and locates morality not simply in the individual's reason, but in a universal moral self-consciousness, which it holds to be a real existence. Nevertheless, its move away from the individual is only a move towards the intersubjective or the social, and not truly a move towards Spirit. Its attitude coincides with the attitude of those interpreters of Hegel who see the 'solution' to the Hegelian problem as 'mutual recognition', in which the problems of individualistic morality are resolved with reference to the social field.

The assertion of a universal morality, however, implies a recognition of the actual existence of its opposite, just as earlier we saw that the assertion that the state ought to be rational - rational being understood in this case as general or universal - implied that the actual state is irrational, or contains a moment of particularity. It follows that the moral world view implies its opposite, that the universal moral consciousness which ought to exist does not in fact exist, or, that the moral world view will develop antinomies. The sections of the chapter on Morality prior to Conscience develop these antinomies with a degree of detail Hegel does not repeat elsewhere. In the Philosophy of Right he refers to this passage as follows:

"The further antinomies of this never-ending ought-to-be, in which the exclusively moral way of thinking - thinking in terms of *relation* - just wanders to and fro without being able to resolve them and get beyond the ought-to-be, I have developed in my Phenomenology of Mind". (Philosophy of Right, p.90 §135).

We will not follow this development here, but move instead directly to the position which in Hegel's view results from the experience of the antinomies of duty, the attitude of Conscience.

We will not dwell on the general meaning of Conscience. It is "Spirit that is directly aware of itself as absolute truth and being",<sup>18</sup> or, as Hegel puts it in the Encyclopaedia, "pure self-certitude".<sup>19</sup> It is the certainty that the individual himself knows the real existence of and is responsible for the choice between good and evil.<sup>20</sup> We will understand the significance of this more clearly if we move directly to consider the experience of Conscience by natural consciousness as it is set out in the Phenomenology.

In general, the experience of Conscience may be summarised as the same as the experience of ethical order, namely the experience of the reality of good and evil; but while the experience of tragedy reveals this to a naive consciousness, Conscience reveals this to one which has already had this experience, but which has lost it again by allowing the notions of good and evil to ossify into things. This distinction corresponds, of course, to the general distinction Hegel makes between the respective aims of ancient and modern thought, the task of the latter being to free "determinate thoughts from their fixity so as to give actuality to the universal, and impart to it spiritual Life".<sup>21</sup>

Natural consciousness arrives at the notion of Conscience through rejecting the Kantian projection of morality onto a universal moral self-consciousness which is associated with the notion of God, and instead taking responsibility for its own action in a concretely individual way. In the opening sentences of Conscience the reference to and rejection of Kant's Religion is clear:

18. Phenomenology, p. 384

19. Philosophy of Mind, p. 252, §511.

20. *Ibid.*

21. Phenomenology, p.19, cf Ch.4, p.5) above. When Hegel discusses Conscience in the Philosophy of Right, he refers both to the passage of the Phenomenology on *Sittlichkeit*, and (twice) to the passage on Morality. The fact that there are in general very few references to the Phenomenology in Hegel's later work may perhaps add to the significance of these ones here.

"The antinomy of the moral view of the world, viz. that there is a moral consciousness, and that there is none, or that the validation of duty lies beyond consciousness, and conversely, takes place *in* it - these contradictions were gathered up in the idea in which the *non*-moral consciousness has moral validity, its contingent knowing and willing are assumed to have full weight, and happiness is granted to it as an act of grace [*aus Gnade zuteil wurde*]. Moral self-consciousness did not accept responsibility for this idea, but shifted it on to a being other than itself". (Phenomenology, p. 383)

This reflection of morality back into the individual is not a return to the individualism of, for example, the categorical imperative. It has resulted from the experience specifically of moral consciousness, and it is precisely a reflection into the self of the moral consciousness which from the standpoint of duty was a postulate of reason, which, as a postulate, did not necessarily exist. It is ethical substance intuited as subject or self, and the individual who knows this is not the abstract individual of reason, but the concretely moral individual of Spirit.

"It is, when thus returned into itself, *concrete* moral Spirit, which, in the consciousness of pure duty, does not give itself an empty criterion to be used against actual consciousness; on the contrary, pure duty, as also the Nature opposed to it, are superseded moments. Spirit is, in an immediate unity, a *self-actualizing* being, and the action is immediately something *concretely* moral". (Phenomenology, p.385).

Properly understood, then, Conscience is in itself nothing less than absolute Spirit. It remains only to demonstrate this as a necessity to natural consciousness, and the phenomenological development of subjective and objective Spirit will be complete.

The experience of Conscience passes through three phases. The first corresponds to the reaction to Kantian morality exemplified by the work of Jacobi, whom Hegel discusses immediately after Kant in Faith and Knowledge. This introduces to morality the subjective element of moral feeling which was absent from Kant's duty for duty's sake.



"In Kant's philosophy finitude and subjectivity have an objective form, the form of the concept. Jacobi's philosophy, on the contrary makes subjectivity entirely subjective, it turns it into individuality. This subjective core of the subjective thus regains an inner life so that it seems to be capable of the beauty of feeling [*Empfindung*]" (Faith and Knowledge, p. 97)

In the Phenomenology, this attitude, which is indeed the beginning of conscience, is described as conviction, which

"is simple action in accordance with duty, which fulfils not this or that duty, but knows and does what is concretely right" (Phenomenology, p. 386).

Conviction, as Hegel goes to some lengths to explain, has a greater value than duty, for two reasons which may be mentioned here. Firstly, its pragmatic attitude allows it at least to act in good faith,<sup>22</sup> while duty was always duplicitous. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, it raises the idea that the criterion of its moral worth lies not in some abstract moral law, but in the recognition it is accorded by others.

The weakness of conviction, however, is that it may turn this last virtue on its head, and argue that its own conviction of good faith absolves it from any external criticism. In the 'Confessions of a Beautiful Soul', Goethe has his heroine express this attitude: "In the face of public opinion, my profoundest conviction and my innocence were my surest guarantees".<sup>23</sup> This attitude may display a vulnerability and a humanity which is absent from Kant's unbending conception of moral law, but at the same time it protects itself against this vulnerability by using as a defence its own conviction.

22. A good faith which is more concrete than the empty "honest consciousness" exemplified by the narrator of Diderot's Rameau's Nephew, which Hegel discussed in "Culture" (Phenomenology, p. 138 and p. 389)

23. From Goethe's Wilhelm Meister, quoted by Hyppolite, op. cit. p. 501.

The admission that all action must be justified turns into a justification of any action, and what seemed like an acceptance of responsibility in the public eye turns into a denial of the same thing. Conviction may be acknowledged, indeed must be acknowledged, since it is an essential moment of self-consciousness (i.e., universal self-consciousness),<sup>24</sup> but this does not apply to specific actions, which are "not identical with the element of everyone's self-consciousness, and therefore not necessarily acknowledged"<sup>25</sup>.

This, of course, is a difficulty which will have to be faced by any attempt to ground ethics in conviction or recognition, and it leads Hegel into the second phase of his discussion of Conscience. Here he moves from the reaction to Kant found in Jacobi to a second reaction to Kant's enlightened protestantism. This is the romantic restatement of the value of religion, and Hegel appears to have Novalis especially in mind.<sup>26</sup> This movement may be summarised very briefly as follows.

The blank oscillation of conviction between recognition and non-recognition which recalls the earlier oscillation of dependence and independence in Lordship and Bondage, refers consciousness to the medium which relates these two extremes, that is language. In the language which Goethe's heroine disdains, conviction become actual, and the actual moral consciousness becomes committed to a specific action. Just as earlier thought made self-consciousness universal, so here language makes Spirit universal.

24. Phenomenology, p. 388.

25. Ibid, p. 394.

26. Kojève, op.cit, p.282. See also Novalis' "Christendom or Europe", in Reiss, ed. The Political Thought of the German Romantics, Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1955.

At the same time, however, language brings to morality specific moral content - just as Unhappy Consciousness earlier brought a content to free self-consciousness. Language here is therefore presented as playing a double role. On the one hand, it plays the part of mediating reason, making concrete recognition a possibility. On the other hand, it contributes what moral reason in the form of duty lacked, a specific and concrete content, which is both freely intuited by the individual and yet equally acknowledged by the community. The rational and the divine aspects of language, in other words, are intuited as one, and we have come full circle back to the intuition of the first moment of Spirit, of the divine nature of language.<sup>27</sup> Against the iconoclasm of the reformation it is asserted that the rich imagery of religious mythology is not incompatible with individual reason, and that both aspects are equally essential moments of language. "Phantoms rule where there are no gods".<sup>28</sup> Hegel writes

"Conscience, then, in the majesty of its elevation above specific law and every content of duty, puts whatever it pleases into its knowing and willing. It is the moral genius which knows the inner voice of what it immediately knows to be a divine voice; and since in knowing this, it has an equally immediate knowledge of existence, it is the divine creative power which in its notion possesses the spontaneity of life. Equally, it is in its own self divine worship for its action is the contemplation of its own divinity.

This solitary worship is at the same time essentially the divine worship of a *community*, and the pure inner *knowing* and perceiving of itself advances to the moment of *consciousness*. (Phenomenology, p. 397).

27. Phenomenology, p. 66.

28. Novalis, in Reiss (ed.) op.cit. p.138. Cf C.G. Jung, Collected Works Vol. 9 Part I, p. 12ff.

However, the synthesis of religion and subjective morality, or of religious and philosophical theology, to use Kant's language, has not yet been achieved, since this attitude is not yet aware that what it is conscious of in religion is indeed its own self - and vice-versa.

"In so far as this conscience still distinguishes its *abstract* consciousness from its *self-consciousness* it has only a *hidden* life in God, it is true that God is *immediately* present in its mind and heart, in its self; but what is manifest, its actual consciousness and the mediating movement of that consciousness, is for it something other than that hidden inner life and the immediacy of God's presence". (Phenomenology, p. 398).

It is only once these two sides are brought together that Conscience is completed, and the Protestant view restated at a higher level, indeed, at the highest level, of Absolute Spirit itself.

This leads Hegel to the third and final phase of the development of conscience, which will bring together the subjective attitude of Jacobi with the romantic view of objective reality (especially the reality of the Catholic church) of Novalis.

This phase begins with a romantic attitude which we have already encountered, the attitude of the 'beautiful soul' of Goethe and Hölderlin.<sup>29</sup> This attitude is a result of the notion of the previous attitude that the divine is essentially only the inner self, or what is known as the soul. With this attitude, natural consciousness - like unhappy consciousness before it - stands back from the outer world, since contact with this world can only detract from the purity of its inner spirit.

29. See Ch.1 p.15 above, and Hyppolite op. cit. p. 501. In the final chapter of the Phenomenology, Hegel says that the beautiful soul is "not only the intuition of the Divine but the Divine's intuition of itself" (loc.cit. p.483).

"It lives in dread of besmirching the splendour of its inner being by action and an existence; and, in order to preserve the purity of its heart, it flees from contact with the actual world, and persists in its self-willed impotence to renounce its self which is reduced to the extreme of ultimate abstraction, and to give itself a substantial existence, or to transform its thought into being and put its trust in the absolute difference between thought and being ." (Phenomenology, p.400)

The beautiful soul stands opposed to the consciousness which has conviction, and calls it both evil and hypocritical. It is evil because its own conscientiousness is not the same as the universal of morality, and hypocritical because it nevertheless claims that this is so.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, the beautiful soul, which itself disdains action, sets out to demonstrate the hypocrisy of acting conscience.

To begin with, the conflict between these two attitudes appears beyond reconciliation. One can either act, and do the best one can, or do nothing, and remain inwardly perfect. However, the perfection of the beautiful soul is evidently inadequate to its idea of itself, for moral perfection must involve moral deeds. Further, its accusation of hypocrisy soon rings hollow, as it becomes evident that it does not mean that the consciousness with conviction is hypocritical in this or that respect, but generally hypocritical. The emptiness of such a criticism is evident, and Hegel comments - giving a gloss to a statement of Napoleon's, which later inspired Goethe<sup>31</sup> - that

"No man is a hero to his valet; not, however, because the man is not a hero, but because the valet - is a valet, whose dealings are with the man, not as a hero, but as one who eats, drinks, and wears clothes, in general, with his individual wants and fancies. Thus, for the judging consciousness, there is no action in which it could not oppose to the universal action, the personal aspect of the individuality, and play the part of the

30. Phenomenology, p.401

31. Hyppolite, op. cit. p. 522

*moral* valet towards the agent". (Phenomenology, p. 404).

When the acting consciousness perceives this in the judgemental attitude of the beautiful soul, it perceives that this apparently perfect being is in fact just as flawed as its own self:

"it [the consciousness that judges] is recognised by the latter [conviction] as the same as itself." (Phenomenology, p.405)

Once conviction perceives its critic to be imperfect, it is able to communicate with it, and confesses its own inadequacy, expecting that the other will do likewise and forgive his imperfection in the light of his own acknowledgement of it.

To begin with, however, the beautiful soul had no such intention, and takes the latter's confession of his human weakness only as confirmation of its own superiority. Like the Jewish people, who in Hegel's view could love only perfect being, that is God, and not imperfect men, it remains "hard-hearted".<sup>33</sup> But, Hegel argues, the very hard-heartedness of this attitude is also its destruction, and the more unrelentingly it sticks to the immediacy of its beautiful soul, the more it experiences its own need to externalise itself. It would be unable to resolve this contradiction on its own, but it has before it the example of one who has confessed his own imperfection, and has changed his empty conviction - the conviction of his innocence - into a concrete conviction which acknowledges his own evil and intends to fight against it.

33. ETW p. 187, and p.217



Seeing this change in the nature of the conviction of conscience, it extends forgiveness towards it: but this forgiveness is not something abstract, a mere absolution, but is for the beautiful soul a renunciation of its own self, and reconciles it as well with the consciousness which has conviction, and henceforth there is no distinction between them.

"The word of reconciliation is the *objectively* existent Spirit, which beholds the pure knowledge of itself *qua universal* essence, in its opposite, in the pure knowledge of itself *qua* absolutely self-contained and exclusive *individuality* - a reciprocal recognition which is *absolute* Spirit". (Phenomenology, p. 408)

Conscience, then, in its fully developed form is the acknowledgement of the real existence of sin, which acknowledgement is from another point of view the forgiveness of sin, and also has the significance of being absolute Spirit. The doctrine of the forgiveness of sin, then, is in Hegel's view rightly understood as the reconciliation of man with man through God. The notion of sin is itself defined not by an abstract moral law, as it was by Kant,<sup>34</sup> nor by a mediator, as it is perhaps in the Catholic faith, in certain practices if not necessarily in its actual doctrine, but by a mutual recognition of the existence of God within the community. Morality, therefore needs religion, and the world of knowledge becomes at one with the world of faith.

"The reconciling *Yea*, in which the two 'I's let go their antithetical *existence* is the *existence* of the 'I' which has expanded itself into a duality, and, in its complete externalization and opposite, possesses the certainty of itself: it is God manifested in the midst of those who know themselves in the form of pure knowledge". (Phenomenology, p. 409).

The teaching of a 'fisher of men', therefore, is the conclusion of this last, Piscean stage of Spirit.

34. Kant, Religion, op.cit.p.27.

## CHAPTER NINE : CONCLUSION

If we have followed Hegel this far, we should be fully initiated into the idea of philosophy. Examining each of the twelve <sup>1</sup> partial manifestations of Spirit, we have found that the truth of each lies not in itself but in something higher, and we have finally arrived at the stage where knowledge is explicitly acknowledged equally to be faith in Religion. The truth, therefore, has been established both as something which exists in the form of an infinite being which can never be fully possessed, and yet at the same time as something which is by no means simply beyond our knowledge. From the point of view of Understanding, this is simply a contradiction: truth both can and cannot be possessed. From the point of view of Spirit, however, this contradiction expresses something with which we are quite familiar, namely, love. If Hegel is right, therefore, philosophy, which is the love of truth, has been established as a valid and indeed necessary attitude. As Hyppolite says:

"Philosophy is not a logic, an organon, which before knowledge, deals with the instrument of knowledge. Nor is it love of truth which is not the possession of truth. It is science, and, as Schelling claimed, science of the absolute". (Hyppolite, op.cit. p.5)

1. The figure of twelve is arrived at by taking sense-certainty; perception; Understanding; desire; Lordship and bondage; free self-consciousness, observing Reason; actualisation of rational self-consciousness; individuality which takes itself to be read in and for itself; *Sittlichkeit*; culture; and morality respectively to be the essential moments of Spirit. (Cf. note 4 to Part 2).

The introduction therefore is complete, and we may therefore proceed to philosophy proper - in this case to the Science of Logic - with the certain knowledge that what we are doing is worthwhile.

This leaves the chapter on Religion to account for, and I hasten to reiterate that by declining to discuss it in detail I do not want to belittle its significance. As Lauer says,

"It would be worse than arbitrary to look upon Chapter VII [Religion] as either a parenthesis between chapters V [Spirit] and VIII [Absolute knowing] or as not really saying what it purports to be saying, that is, that religious consciousness, which has God as its object, is indispensable to philosophical thinking and knowing." (Lauer, Hegel's Concept of God, op.cit. p.23).

I have already given some reasons for leaving an exegesis of Religion out of my account of the Phenomenology,<sup>2</sup> and I will add two further reasons here. Firstly, it seems to me that Religion in the Phenomenology is amongst the least interesting and worst written passages in Hegel's work, and simply does not repay the reader for detailed study. Secondly, since I myself am not generally inclined towards religion, or at least was not until I embarked on this work, I am disinclined to pass judgement on its content. However, as I hope has been made clear, Hegel's attitude to religion is by no means merely an adjunct to his philosophical thought, nor even an aspect of it, but its very foundation. As Fackenheim says:

"In the Hegelian system, religion appears as one among other forms of spiritual life. This must under no circumstances obscure the fact that *it is also the basis and the condition of the possibility of the system in its entirety*". (Emil Fackenheim, The Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1967).

I would like to conclude, therefore, by offering a few comments on the significance of Hegel's identification of truth with Absolute Being, that is, God.

2. See p. 331 above.

Some commentators have taken Hegel's attitude to be radically atheist. Hegel is interpreted as identifying man and God, and this means that there is no difference between the two. Man is God, or God is man - it makes no difference. Religion is an attitude which has not yet grasped this identity. Thus, for example, Kojève argues that

"while in fact talking about himself the religious Man believes that he is talking about God." (Kojève, op. cit. p.71)

Further, Hegel is in Kojève's view the first philosopher to realize this.

"God and the afterlife have always been denied by certain men. But Hegel was the first to try to formulate a complete *philosophy* that is atheistic and finitist in relation to Man (at least in the great *Logik* and the earlier writings). He not only gave a correct description of *finite* human existence on the "phenomenological" level, which allowed him to use the fundamental categories of Judaeo-Christian thought without any inconsistency. He also tried (without completely succeeding, it is true) to complete this description with a metaphysical and ontological analysis, also radically atheistic and finitist. But very few of his readers have understood that in the final analysis dialectic means atheism". (Kojève, op.cit. p.259n)

Benedetto Croce makes a similar argument, describing Hegel's philosophy as

"radically irreligious, because it is not content to oppose itself to religion or to range it alongside itself, but resolves religion into itself and substitutes itself for it". (Benedetto Croce, quoted in P.Singer, Hegel, op. cit. p.82).

Nor is it only people who are themselves committed to atheism who interpret Hegel in this way. Paul Ricoeur, for example, complains that

"A teleology carried out in Hegelian style does not have as *eschaton*, as final term, the sacred delivered in myth, cult, belief. Of itself, what this teleology envisions is absolute knowing, not faith; and absolute knowing bespeaks no transcendence only the subsumption of all transcendence in a thoroughly mediated self-knowledge". (Ricoeur, quoted in Lauer, Hegel's Concept of God, op.cit. p.4).

It would be possible to cite a multitude of similar opinions. However, there are few people who would go so far as to say that Hegel himself was self-consciously opposed to religious faith, and anyone who did make such an assertion would have to account for a vast number of passages in his writing which explicitly and firmly assert the value and truth of religious faith.

The real difficulty, so it seems to me, lies not so much in establishing what Hegel says, as in establishing precisely what is meant by the question of whether or not God exists - a question which Hegel never raises, at least not in this form.<sup>3</sup> It is natural enough, of course, in view of the fact that the conclusion of the Phenomenology appears to be that truth is God, to ask what is meant by God - but how could such a question be answered?

There is, in Hegel's view and in my experience only one way, and that is concretely, through a phenomenological description of the experience of absolute Being in the life of any "natural consciousness". If there were a shorter way, Hegel presumably would have taken it. As things stand, it appears that any shorter route is bound to become an abstraction from the truth, which, as Hegel says, is the whole, and such an abstraction, because it is abstract, is bound to lead to contradictory interpretations, such as those cited above. Ultimately, we will be able to deduce from any one the antinomy that God both exists, and does not exist. What, after all, is Kant's assertion that the Divine is beyond knowledge, but an antinomy?

3. Hegel on occasion speaks of God's *Dasein*, but not of his *Existenz*, which would impute to him a finite thing-like being. See Lauer, Hegel's Concept of God, op.cit. p. 206.

For if the Divine is beyond knowledge, how is it that we are able to give it a name? Kant's view can be expressed as "we know what is beyond knowledge", or that "we both know and do not know the Divine". To Hegel, this suggests that the question is being both posed and answered in an abstract form, which, as he has demonstrated with each of the abstract forms of Spirit throughout the Phenomenology, will lead it into self-contradiction.

It is necessary, then, to understand the entire Phenomenology as being an answer, and perhaps the only answer, and perhaps only the answer to the question "does God exist"? This is not necessarily to denigrate faith, which does not necessarily seek a true answer to such a question. In this sense, there is a short cut to knowledge, a "royal road", as Hegel says. The faith of an uneducated man may be every bit as good as the faith of a philosopher.

"This common road can be taken in casual dress; but the high sense for the Eternal, the Holy, the Infinite strides along in the robes of a high priest, on a road that is from the first no road, but has immediate being as its centre, the genius of profound original ideas and lofty flashes of inspiration. But just as profundity of this kind still does not reveal the source of essential being, so, too, these sky-rockets of inspiration are not yet the empyrean. True thoughts and scientific insight are only to be won through the labour of the Notion. (Phenomenology, p.43)

To establish scientifically the existence of absolute truth, then, the royal road will not do. We must follow the entire development of the Phenomenology, and see for ourselves how at every stage the experience of natural consciousness demonstrates as a necessity the existence of absolute Being. We should be clear, however, that this does not mean that the experience of the Phenomenology is itself to be identified with absolute Being. Hegel's view is not the pantheist view that "all is God",<sup>4</sup>

4. P.Singer op.cit. p.81. Cf also Philosophy of Mind p.305, §573 and p.31 §398 - where Hegel comments "Pantheism fails altogether to organise and systematise its content".



and it is partly for this reason that it is significant that Hegel includes in the Phenomenology a chapter on Religion.

The chapter on Religion, then, gives what is absent from Plato's philosophy, namely, an account of "absolute Being in and for itself, the self-consciousness of Spirit"<sup>5</sup> as it is presented to consciousness by the great religions of the world. This does not mean that it is merely an adjunct to the rest of the Phenomenology. In particular, it is worth stressing again that it is not simply a solution to the problems specifically of Morality. Religion is not simply - as has been said - a language which makes possible a reconciliation between people which the purely moral attitude could not bring about on its own. The attitude of forgiveness does not require the language of religion - this would be the Kantian view which 'postulates' religion - but, in Hegel's view, presents to natural consciousness which questions its experience the reality of God "manifested in the midst of those who know themselves in the form of pure knowledge". While this experience may occur directly only at the level of morality, it is nevertheless the case that Religion is in Hegel's view the result of all that has gone before, and not simply of Morality. Religion is "the perfection of Spirit into which its individual moments - consciousness, self-consciousness, Reason, and Spirit - return",<sup>6</sup> and "presupposes that these have run their course and is their *simple* totality or absolute self".<sup>7</sup>

5. Phenomenology, p.410.

6. Phenomenology, p. 413.

7. Ibid.

However, this does not mean that Hegel has identified philosophy and religion. They are both concerned with absolute being, but in religion absolute being still appears as an object. Hegel's view, however - and this is perhaps the most slippery of all his ideas - is that what appears in religion as an object is capable also of being intuited as the thought of a subject. Once we have been initiated by the Phenomenology into the notion of the Absolute, we no longer need actual experience in order to know it. This assertion makes sense only on the basis of the identity of Divine Being and self-conscious Reason, thought and being - an identity which, as has been argued, implies in this case not a reduction of Divine being to Reason, but an elevation of Reason to Divinity. Knowledge of God in the proper sense of the word knowledge is therefore to be achieved through logic, and phenomenology leads us only to an acknowledgement of his existence. This leads to the position which Kaufmann calls "on the face of it, perhaps the maddest image in all of Hegel's writings",<sup>8</sup> and which has already been cited above.<sup>9</sup>

"The Logic is thus to be understood as the system of pure reason, as the realm of pure thought. *This realm is truth as it is without any shroud in and for itself.* One might therefore say that this content is the *account of God, as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of nature and any finite Spirit*". (Science of Logic, p.60)

It seems clear to me that this view is neither atheism, nor orthodox christian theology; though I believe that Hegel thought it was compatible with christian theology. Whether or not it is mad, I do not know. However, if we reject Hegel's conclusion that Reason itself is Divine, then I do

8. Kaufmann, op.cit. p.195.

9. P. 29 and p. 127 above.

not see any alternative but to accept that the Divine is beyond philosophical knowledge, and that faith is essentially irrational. If faith is indeed irrational, it follows that there is no point in arguing about it, since individuals who accept or reject it will not be using rational criteria. Philosophy in particular, then, would have no business in interfering with faith, and it would have to find some other purpose. In such a case, I personally would be inclined to doubt that it could find a valid *raison d'être*, and to agree with the young Marx, that it is no more than an empty idealist pursuit which serves only the negative purpose of directing our attention away from more pressing issues.

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